

Interview with Gene Reineke

ISG-A-L-2009-038

Interview # 1: December 7, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is Monday, December 7, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here this afternoon with Eugene Reineke, but you mentioned usually you're known as Gene.

Reineke: That's correct, Mark.

DePue: Why don't you tell us where we are.

Reineke: We're here at my current employer, which is Hill & Knowlton, Inc. It's a public relations firm, and we're located at the Merchandise Mart in downtown Chicago.

DePue: Which has a fascinating history itself. Someday I'll have to delve into that one. We're obviously here to talk about your experiences in the Edgar administration, but you had a lot of years working with Jim Thompson as well, so we're going to take quite a bit of time. In today's session, I don't know that we'll get to much of the Edgar experience because you've got enough information to talk about before that time, which is valuable history for us. Why don't you start off with a quick reference to when and where you were born?

Reineke: I was born in New York City, in the borough of Queens, in 1956. I grew up on Long Island and proceeded to move with my family, when I was about to enter my senior year of high school, from New York to Saint Charles, Illinois.

DePue: Let's spend a little bit of time getting to know who you were when you were growing up in Queens. Now, did you say Long Island you moved to?

Reineke: Yeah. We lived in Queens till I was five or six, and then we moved out to Suffolk County on Long Island. It's all Long Island, but for New Yorkers there's a distinction between the city and the counties outside of New York

City. So I lived there approximately eleven years with my family, in a town called Hauppauge, Long Island.

DePue: Hauppauge?

Reineke: Hauppauge, which was at that time part of a town called Smithtown. But Hauppauge is now the county seat of Suffolk County.

DePue: That sounds like one of the Native American names or something like that.

Reineke: A lot of the cities and towns on Long Island have that American Indian heritage in terms of the names.

DePue: What were your parents doing for a living?

Reineke: My dad was an executive with General Motors, which he did for most of his career, and my mom was a homemaker. There were three of us. I'm the oldest of three children—a younger sister and a younger brother.

DePue: Anything we need to know about the years growing up in Queens and then Long Island itself?

Reineke: Not particularly. I went to public schools until I went to high school. I went to St. Anthony's college preparatory school for boys, run by the Franciscan Brothers, for my first three years of high school. Then I went out to Saint Charles High School, which was obviously public and co-ed, so that was an interesting transition for a young man.

DePue: What's the ethnic background of your parents? I assume you're Catholic; you grew up in a Catholic home?

Reineke: Yeah, although we go to Episcopal church right now. My dad's family was German and my mother's family was English, French, Irish, and American Indian—and I think a little German thrown in, too.

DePue: (laughs) You had a little bit of everything growing up.

Reineke: Just about, just about.

DePue: Do you know when your father's side of the family got here?

Reineke: I believe it was the late 1800s. My mother's side, I want to say, goes back to the early 1800s, because several of our ancestors had some notoriety in American history. In fact, if I remember this correctly, my great-great-great-great-grandfather was Winfield Scott, who was the general prior to the Civil War but also the first commander of the Civil War.

DePue: The Anaconda Plan. He was commander during the Mexican War.

Reineke: Yep.

DePue: Tell us a little about your interests growing up.

Reineke: A typical childhood. Played Little League, Boy Scouts. Loved to read, always have enjoyed that. I probably had the unusual distinction that early on in my life, when I was something like twelve or thirteen, I just developed a strong interest in politics. Now, both of my parents, particularly my mother, have always been interested in politics. I started reading *U.S. News and World Report* back then on a weekly basis. I actually subscribed to *National Review* at that time. I was following my parents', particularly my mother's, political persuasion or philosophy, which was more conservative than I eventually became as an adult. I just picked up on politics and enjoyed it. I remember asking my dad in 1966 to take me down to Central Islip on Long Island because Bobby Kennedy, who was our senator from New York at that time, was there, and we got to hear him make some remarks. I don't remember particularly what they were about. I remember, probably 1967, being in a Boy Scout parade, carrying a flag in the honor guard, and having the opportunity to shake hands with Nelson Rockefeller, who was New York's longtime governor at that time. Then in 1968, I recall asking my parents again to take us to MacArthur Airport in Central Islip to see Richard Nixon, who was campaigning against Hubert Humphrey for the presidency.

DePue: A couple questions here.

Reineke: Sure.

DePue: I can't notice too much of an accent.

Reineke: Seriously, you can't?

DePue: There was just a tinge of it when you said "Long Island," I think.

Reineke: Certain words. Most of the accent disappeared over the years. You can catch it with certain words: an *r* at the end, like *idear*, or *horse* or *coffee*. There's probably a dozen or so words that are hard. I have to slow down. If I start talking too fast, you can still hear a little bit of the New York accent.

DePue: I'm wondering, though, growing up and having this fascination—would that be too strong a word to use for your interest in politics at an early age?

Reineke: No, I think that's fair. Yeah, I think it's an accurate description—that I was fascinated by it. I think the competitive nature of it is what really turned me on. In a lot of ways, it's sort of like a sports contest, because there's a time period and then there's a decision that's made. Usually you have a victor and a loser at the end of an election contest, just like you do in an athletic game—winners and losers.

DePue: But your early years are in some pretty contentious times for American politics. Do you remember the '64 election? You might have been way too young at that time.

Reineke: I remember my parents voting for and wanting Barry Goldwater to win, and obviously Lyndon Johnson was overwhelmingly reelected, but that was before I had any really deep interest. But again, it goes back to the issue of, do parents influence their children. Obviously they do, and that was the start of my political interest, but I think it was just natural inside me to continue to nurture and grow that interest.

DePue: And your observations about the '68 election? I assume you remember that one more clearly.

Reineke: Yeah, I do remember. Obviously it was close. George Wallace was involved. Wallace probably pulled some voters away from Nixon. I think the feeling was that Humphrey was really in a bad position, having come off of a divided Democratic Party with Eugene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy, and with the assassination, in the spring, of Martin Luther King. Really, coming out of Chicago at that time, Humphrey did represent, I think to most people, the more traditional wing, not the anti-war wing, of the Democratic Party. If I recall correctly, Nixon became infamous years later—you know, the secret plan to end the Vietnam War—and I think there was sort of a feeling that he, regardless of what happened in subsequent years, did offer the country a change in a different way, even though he obviously had prior history and a lot of critics at the time.

DePue: Do you recall your own views at that time about the Vietnam War? That was certainly the hot issue.

Reineke: Yeah. I think I probably didn't have a strong view on was it right, was it wrong. I do remember, though, that I used for this report I did, when I was in sixth grade, on politics and the history of the parties, a picture of a soldier fighting. The reason that stuck with me was because I was able to make that correlation between what happens in politics obviously affects policy and people's lives in a very serious way.

DePue: Of course, when you and I were growing up, the overwhelming emphasis about warfare was about that World War II generation.

Reineke: Sure, sure. That was a generational change, the sixties, not just because of war and politics, but societal standards and wars and the advent of the drug scene in America and peace and love and all that unusual stuff that happens.

DePue: Were you seen as something of a strange character, having this passion for politics, when you were growing up among your buddies?

Reineke: Yeah, probably a little bit of a—I don't want to say outlier. Maybe *geek* is too (laughs) strong of a word. But I did have the interest in student council, so that was natural. I think as you get older and you get into the more formative teenage years where you go through a lot of changes, I think it gets a little more awkward then. But at the end of the day, as you get through high school, I think everybody kind of does their own thing. So I don't think it was like, boy, this guy's some unusual character or anything like that.

It's interesting, because I saw a couple weeks ago on CNN a little boy down in Arkansas that I believe wouldn't say the pledge; it was over the issue of gay rights in the United States. He was protesting the fact that same-sex couples couldn't get married. It was interesting because I think people looked at that and kind of felt, Ah, good for him. He's speaking out on a subject, and it was unusual. I think there's more willingness in society now to have younger people offer opinions and different views on just about anything, and some of that's probably the technology age we live in. But I don't think there was any, in my own personal experience—I wasn't ostracized or criticized or marginalized.

DePue: During those next four years, '68 to '72, a lot happened as well. Sixty-eight was an especially tumultuous year, but things didn't settle down quite a bit. Seventy, of course, you have the Kent State incident. And you have what starts to be percolating about the problems in the Nixon administration by '72, at least.

Reineke: Yes, '73. It happened in '72, but it bubbled up right after the election, right.

DePue: And then you moved in '73 to Chicago, at what age?

Reineke: I was seventeen, or right before I was seventeen, because it was the end of junior year. I had to start my senior year in Saint Charles.

DePue: That's a tough time to be making a move like that.

Reineke: Yeah, it was unusual. It's funny, because I have been presented with opportunities to look at locating in different cities around the country, either on a permanent basis or even on a temporary basis, when I've been in the private sector since I've left government. One of the big things that always factors into my thinking is, What about my family? Because when you have kids, it affects them an awful lot. I was at the point where you finish three years of high school somewhere and you're going to move to another area; that can be a little bit disruptive. Interestingly enough, (laughs) I didn't really mind it. I was attracted to the idea of coming to another place, Chicago.

When I was a kid—speaking of things I used to be interested in—I used to read newspapers from out of state. I would ask for, like, free samples of the *Chicago Tribune* or the *Washington Post*, or something like that beyond just reading the New York papers. Again, it's funny because some of these

memories come back up. I remember how excited I was when I convinced my mother to get a home subscription to the *New York Times* instead of just reading *The Daily News* or *Newsday*. Gosh, I sound more like a geek the more I talk. (laughter)

DePue: No, this is great. Any memories, strong memories, of that timeframe? You're moving about the time where Watergate really starts to percolate out. We already mentioned Kent State, all the anti-war protests, draft dodgers burning draft cards, what was going on in the student movement. You're about ready to go into college, so any memories in that respect?

Reineke: Yeah, a little bit. I had a job—when I was sixteen, seventeen, moving to Illinois—at the Eagle Supermarket in Saint Charles, and I remember having numerous discussions with some of my coworkers at the supermarket. I was still actually in the position of defending the Nixon administration against some of the charges, Sam Ervin's committee, et cetera.¹ So I was still in that kind of dyed-in-the-wool Republican philosophy, for a young guy. I think I probably started to evolve politically when I finished high school and began college. I think that probably happens with an awful lot of people.

DePue: Since we're at this pivotal moment—and this is probably an unfair question—was this a philosophical orientation to be a conservative or Republican, or was it just kind of loyalty to the family tradition, or a bit of both?

Reineke: It probably started out more as loyalty to the family tradition, but I think it actually evolved to a philosophical position, where I really did believe in the philosophy of a William Buckley or some of the more conservative leaders of the Republican Party at the time.

DePue: Which wasn't where Richard Nixon was in the party spectrum, was it?

Reineke: No, but I also think at that time you didn't have the ideological split in the Republican Party. It sort of came to a head with the Goldwater nomination and then the massive loss in the presidential election to Lyndon Johnson. Growing up in 1968, the Republican convention was in Miami Beach that year, and I remember reading magazines—buying *Time*, *Newsweek*, and books about the campaign and the candidates. But I also remember the three main Republican candidates being Nelson Rockefeller, Richard Nixon—and Ronald Reagan made his first appearance on the national scene.

DePue: Three distinct wings of the Republican Party at the time.

Reineke: Very much so. I remember being with Nixon—I'm trying to remember why in particular—over our own governor at the time, Rockefeller, or Ronald Reagan out of California. But back to where you wind up—I don't think the

¹ Sam Ervin (D-North Carolina) chaired the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, which investigated the Watergate scandal.

Republican Party then had the same kind of issues that we eventually saw in the future and we see today, where it's got a personality challenge, trying to figure out who it is and what it wants to be. So that's for later.

DePue: It's fascinating to talk to somebody like yourself who—maybe I would misuse this phrase—but something of a political junkie at an early age.

Reineke: Yeah, I think that would be fair. That'd be fair. Let me put it like this: I didn't have many friends that shared the same interests. (laughs) I didn't have too many external conversations with my classmates or my friends at the time.

DePue: But it's interesting. You're going to end up working for Jim Edgar, and I would describe him kind of the same way growing up—that he had this eternal fascination with all things political.

Reineke: Yeah, from what I've talked to the governor about over the years, and obviously what I've read about him, I think there are certain unique individuals—they're just different—who have a certain drive that most people don't have. I think that really goes in a lot of different fields, but in this case, obviously, I think we may have shared that intense interest from an early age.

DePue: If I were to ask you at age sixteen or seventeen, "Gene, what are you going to do for a living?" what would you have answered?

Reineke: That I wanted to be involved in politics, in government, for a living; that I would get involved in campaigns. Wasn't quite sure how I was going to do it. Was I going to be a lawyer to do it, was I going to try to go into business? I wasn't sure, but that's really, at the end of the day, where I wanted to be. And frankly, at that time, I thought, Boy, I hope I have the opportunity at some point in my life to run for office.

DePue: You wouldn't say that to your friends, though? You wouldn't say, "I want to be governor" or "I want to be a senator"?

Reineke: No, not particularly, not particularly. From what I recall in terms of growing up as a kid, we didn't talk a whole lot about what's going to happen in the future. (laughter) It was more about what's happening that afternoon, that evening, that weekend. Maybe, "Where do you want to go to college," but nothing about life beyond academia.

DePue: How about the differences between Saint Charles and growing up on the eastern end of Long Island? Much difference?

Reineke: They actually have more similarities. I think it's a reflection of America. At that time, Chicago was the second-largest city, New York being the largest, and you've got more transition to affluent areas outside the city. Middle class, but I'd say affluent in the sense that a lot of the families are, in suburban Chicago, suburban New York. A lot of that migration happened with people

who moved out of the city to buy the little suburban subdivision tract of land and raise their kids.

DePue: Let's take a very quick pause here on my account.

Reineke: Sure.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We took a very quick break, and we're back again. I think the next logical question is: college. What places were you looking at? What were you looking for?

Reineke: It was interesting, because my dad took classes at Pace University in New York but did not actually graduate. My mom did not go to college. College was not really something for most of my family, or something that was talked about a whole lot—it was to a degree. I looked at state universities in Illinois, like NIU, and I also looked at some of the universities in the city, particularly Loyola. Just as a reference, if I'd stayed on Long Island, I probably would have been in a similar situation, having gone to Catholic high school for three of the four years, of going to a Catholic school; I probably would have wound up at Fordham, maybe St. John's, in New York. So the issue became, What's the Catholic school that I should be looking at, under the parameter that I was initially going to have to commute rather than live on campus because I was going to have to pay for some of my tuition—my parents were going to pay for some of it—and I had to get a job.

So I wound up going to Loyola, and right when I started at Loyola, I started doing job searches and looked at media-related companies. I could have been an ad-taker at the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Instead, I got offered a position with Time Incorporated at the very beginning of my time at Loyola, so that would have been fall of '74. I wound up working for almost my entire time at college at Time Incorporated, specifically at *Time* magazine, and they wound up paying half my tuition at Loyola.

DePue: Because of the salary you were receiving or because of some other arrangement?

Reineke: *Time* had a program that would reimburse 50 percent of your educational cost.

DePue: Was there some quid pro quo there?

Reineke: The only quid pro quo was that they were grooming people, who knew the organization and worked for them for a period of time, that could have gone on to other positions at Time Incorporated. I had the option, when I finished at Loyola, to go to New York and be considered for other positions within the Time Inc. organization. I chose to go to graduate school instead.

DePue: What were you doing for *Time*?

Reineke: It was called editorial production. It was down on Twenty-Second Street, down by where McCormick Place is now. There was a Donnelley's facility down there. This is the pre-computer days, so the New York offices of *Time* magazine would send out, on Friday afternoon, all of the pictures. Then the stories would come in—teletype machines—for the evening. We would take the stories and the pictures that came in and put them together—how the magazine would look—page by page. Then we would send those pages over to the printer. RR Donnelley in Chicago, which was the main printing operation for Time Inc., would then send to—I think it was twenty-two plants at one time—but send out, via plane, the same material so they could be printed in other locations around the U.S. I did that every Friday and Saturday for years, and during the summers I worked there essentially full-time. I'd get called in once and a while during the week. But what I'd do with *Time* basically killed my social life because I would leave on Friday afternoons after class, and then I would finish up early Saturday afternoons. Then I'd usually go back to Saint Charles after that.

DePue: I'm sure your parents thought it was a fair tradeoff since they were paying for half your college.

Reineke: I think they were delighted with the idea that *Time* paid for 50 percent of my college, and they only had to come up with the other half. Back then, look at what tuition was, compared to tuition nowadays at private schools. So I did that for just about four years.

DePue: Your major in college?

Reineke: It was political science.

DePue: What did you see yourself doing after you graduated?

Reineke: Like a lot of college students, I probably didn't start thinking seriously about what happens next till I was through the first two years, freshman and sophomore. Then I started thinking more about, Okay, what do I need to do in terms of grades; and where; and did I want to do graduate school and law school? I started leaning more towards graduate school, I would say, the beginning of my junior year at Loyola.

DePue: Just to postpone the ultimate decision of what to do with your life, or because...

Reineke: No, because I thought I was going to possibly get my master's and then maybe a doctorate. I thought maybe I would like to teach political science one day. Which is kind of interesting, because I think political science is one of those disciplines where there's a bit of a dichotomy, although I think it has moved more to the empirical in the last twenty years or so. People would

suggest, “Why don’t you just go do it, get involved in politics, rather than just follow the academic route?” But I was just so interested in it at the time.

DePue: I’m trying to get my own personal timeline right. You started college in September or August of ’74?

Reineke: Seventy-four, right, because I graduated in ’78.

DePue: So that would have been right after the Watergate hearings and the resignation?

Reineke: Yeah, that seems right.

DePue: And as a long-time conservative, even as a young kid, what was your reaction to Watergate and what happened to Richard Nixon?

Reineke: I felt bad for him at the time. I felt bad because a president had to resign in disgrace. It was the end of an administration that had, at least potentially, I thought, some positive outcomes. I think there were moderate social policies that the Nixon administration started on. There were issues that I think would have been healthy for the Republican Party to maintain—the environment, for example—at the time. We eventually did get out of Vietnam and Cambodia, the secret wars in Laos and all that. But he really caused a massive—people were disillusioned with the Republican Party. At that point I was a freshman at Loyola, and while it was important to me, there were other parts of trying to fit in as a freshman at college that dominated your life too. But I think that was the beginning of my questioning my political views a little bit. Then with the number of my professors that had different viewpoints, I think I definitely became much more open to other philosophies during my time at Loyola.

DePue: A lot of historians mark this period of time as the beginning of a real cynicism among the American population towards politics. That’s why I was asking the question, because here you are, fascinated with it, and suddenly at this crucial moment in your own life and deciding what you want to do for a career, you’re hit with an obvious failure of the American political system.

Reineke: Yeah, and you know what? Maybe in my subconscious that was more evident than I realized at the time. Maybe I attributed too much to learning about other political views and philosophies, particularly in international relations or political philosophy. It could very well have been a combination of what had happened externally in America, which we were all watching, and what I was learning as a young man in an academic environment.

DePue: I think there’s a danger to make too much of that as well, so... You’ve already kind of alluded to this in a certain respect, and you’ve now decided as you get towards the end of your college career, it sounds like, to go to graduate school.

Reineke: Um-hm.

DePue: And what were your graduate school choices?

Reineke: It was real simple. I was going to stay with the Jesuits. Again, as a Catholic kid growing up on Long Island, went to a Jesuit school—Franciscan on Long Island, high school—but then a Jesuit college at Loyola. My choice was going to be simple: I was either going to go to Boston College or Georgetown—maybe Fordham. I wound up visiting all of them and just fell in love with the BC campus up in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

DePue: What is it about a Jesuit education that would set it apart from other educational systems?

Reineke: I sound like I'm a salesman for the Jesuits, the Society of Jesus, but I think they helped teach me how to think and to question and to examine. I think the fact that Jesuits in general seemed to be, from a Catholic Church perspective, more socially engaged on an international basis in terms of social justice issues—I found that very appealing. When you blended my learning about political philosophies with what the Jesuits did within the Catholic Church in terms of trying to make a difference in the world, I think that really hit home with me.

DePue: You mentioned at the beginning of that discussion how they would teach a person to think. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Reineke: It's more methodology in terms of the questioning. It wasn't so much book learning as much as it was a challenge; it was more of a dialogue back and forth with a number of the priests that I had as professors. I also think I attribute it to the overall environment. I'm not saying someone had to be a Jesuit to have that kind of a learning experience with their students, but I think I put the two together in terms of college and the Jesuit experience. Frankly, that's why I said I want to stick around with another Jesuit institution.

DePue: So you started at Boston College in '78, is that correct?

Reineke: Yeah. It would be like August, September '78.

DePue: Who was helping to pay for graduate school?

Reineke: That was back to my parents again, because obviously they didn't have to spend as much on Loyola as they originally thought.

DePue: But they do have a couple other kids to start putting through college, right?

Reineke: They did. My dad, as I said, was an executive with General Motors, so it worked out fine. Graduate school, on the other hand, only wound up being a

little more than a year; it was like a year and a semester. So I kind of rushed through that.

DePue: I know you had an internship while you were out there. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Reineke: Yeah, it's when I finished up at BC. When I got done, there was a—

DePue: With a master's in political science?

Reineke: With a master's in political science—specialization was American government. There was an older gentleman named Frank Sullivan—who was a Boston attorney that had gone to Boston College undergrad, and I believe Harvard Law—and he had been classmates with Tip O'Neill. I can't guess his age—he's long deceased—but Frank was definitely not in his young twenties. I would suggest that Frank was in his sixties, maybe? He was an older gentleman. Frank and I got to be pals in a couple classes. I had asked him, "Why are you taking these classes to get a master's degree in political science?" He was done being a lawyer, and he just wanted to keep busy and active. Frank arranged for me to get an internship with the New England Congressional Caucus, which was under the auspices of the Speaker of the House, Thomas O'Neill, at that time. That's how I got the internship, following BC, for my four months in Washington, D.C.

DePue: I know Tip O'Neill was one of the most powerful members. He was Speaker, was he not?

Reineke: He was, yes, Speaker of the House.

DePue: And a Democrat.

Reineke: Yeah.

DePue: And New England at that time, I would assume, was primarily Democratic.

Reineke: Yeah. There were a couple of Republicans—Silvio Conte and a couple other more moderate Republican congressmen. Frank was a Democrat, just like O'Neill: Irish, Catholic, Democrats—that's Boston.

DePue: Obviously you jumped at this opportunity. You didn't have any problems with working in... Well, maybe I'm jumping to conclusions myself. Is this primarily a Democratic pool that you're swimming in now?

Reineke: Yeah, but it was more about the opportunity to work with members of Congress and their staff. It was an internship, so I was, "What do you need done?" Our executive director was a fellow named Rob Pratt, who reported directly to the Speaker and the chief of staff. There was somebody—I'm

drawing a blank on the last name—I wound up knowing, who went to work for Hill & Knowlton years later, but I got to meet back in 1979. Gary Hymel.

DePue: Were you still thinking in the back of your mind that law school might be a possibility?

Reineke: Yeah. I had finished in Washington and thought, Did I want to do graduate school or did I want to do law school? Then I was going to finish the internship, come back in 1980, and figure out where I wanted to go come fall.

DePue: What happened to the aspirations of doing something in politics, perhaps even running for office someday?

Reineke: I think as a younger person I didn't know how to really get involved in that. I had to make a career decision because, what's next, what are you supposed to do in terms of what you want to do? Graduate school, law school—they're still sort of those easier choices in a way, as much hard work as you have to do when you're engaged in them. How do you get that chance in politics? It's sort of like one of my kids now; he wants to be a musician. He finished high school; he doesn't want to do college. He's trying to break into music with his band. It's parallel to what I went through, because it's hard to figure out how you break into a field. So that was the driver for me. I remember, my mother encouraged me, "Go talk to our local state senator; go get involved in the campaign." I came back thinking, How do I do this now? More school, whatever? I'm not saying that they would not have wanted me to do more school, but I think that that was probably something in the back of their minds: you've got to act on what you want to do at a certain point in life, not just talk about it.

DePue: Any opportunities that presented themselves when you were working in that internship?

Reineke: If I would have stayed in D.C., but nothing really came up or appealed to me, or nothing was offered; it was like, "Well, we've got something..." So I didn't stay in Washington, no.

DePue: So this internship was immediately following your degree, and it was in Washington, D.C.

Reineke: Correct.

DePue: I guess I was still thinking it was in Boston. That didn't make any sense.

Reineke: No, it does. Our office was right near the House office buildings on Capitol Hill.

DePue: What did you think about that experience now, being right at the heart of American politics in Washington, D.C. then?

Reineke: It was thrilling, it was exciting. A young person in D.C. that loves politics—what else could you ask for? It was great. It was interesting because we wound up sharing—anyone that had internships—living quarters up on Sixteenth Street, up towards the National Zoo. It'd be like three or four of us to the room. You didn't have a car and you got around by getting on the bus system in D.C. Back at that time, Washington, I think, had greater challenges than it does now in terms of the whole issue of crime rate and things like that. So it was a great experience.

DePue: And as you get close to finishing up that internship—you've already alluded to this dialogue you had with your mother—what's next?

Reineke: Came back to Illinois and got involved with state senator John Grotberg's office. A woman named Terri Dakota—Terri was essentially his lead person locally involved with his campaign and Republican campaigns at the time. Senator Grotberg was from Saint Charles. At the end of the day, he and Terri really were the two who gave me my start in—I'll call it the world of politics, or Illinois politics.²

DePue: I should know this. What county is Saint Charles in?

Reineke: Kane County. Really close to DuPage County.

DePue: So a strong Republican area.

Reineke: It was extremely so. The five collars, as they used to be, were very strongly Republican.³

DePue: Any thought that maybe you would want to work for a Democratic campaign instead?

Reineke: No, not really. Even though I may have had a very open mind towards other philosophies when I was in college, I think I got regrounded back in my upbringing. Even though I started out early in my career based on my mother's inherited political philosophy, which was more towards the Bill Buckley conservative school, I think growing up on Long Island, in New York, you have a very pragmatic sense of what kind of Republican I gravitated towards. My models from a political perspective were Nelson Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, John Lindsay.⁴ So moving out to Illinois, I looked at

² John E. Grotberg (R-St. Charles), served in the Illinois House (1973-1977) and Senate (1977-1985) before winning election to the U.S. House from the 14th District. Stricken with cancer, he withdrew from the race to defend his seat in 1986 and was replaced on the ballot by Dennis Hastert (R-Yorkville). Grotberg died in office November 15, 1986. *Chicago Tribune*, November 16, 1986.

³ The collar counties refer to the five counties—Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, and Will—that border Cook County.

⁴ While Reineke was growing up, Rockefeller was governor of New York (1959-1973), Javits was in the U.S. Senate (1957-1981), and Lindsay served in the U.S. House (1959-1965) and as mayor of New York City (1966-1973). Governor Edgar was also a youthful admirer of Rockefeller; see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue,

a state where Chuck Percy's from; and John Grotberg, I think, was a more moderate to conservative Republican as a state legislator. So that, to me, was a really natural transition in a lot of ways. I saw in Illinois what I had grown up with in New York: that more moderate, pragmatic wing of the Republican Party. I think I moved away from the ideological and much more into the practical.⁵

DePue: What did you experience working as an intern, though? Because certainly that wasn't a Republican experience.

Reineke: No. You mean with the New England Congressional Caucus?

DePue: Yes.

Reineke: It was on alternative energy legislation, basically looking at things like wind power and solar power and... Remember, even though New England was essentially, and even more so today, Democratic, it was a bipartisan caucus. I don't remember what the numbers were, but it wasn't like fifteen Democrats and one Republican. I think the numbers were closer. It was probably two to one, or something like that. But the objective was to work together—not the environment that we've seen for many years now in Washington, where it's so polarized between the parties.

DePue: So nothing about your internship caused any dramatic shift in your own personal political philosophy?

Reineke: No, other than the fact that when I put it on a resume, people would ask and kind of chuckle about it, like, How could you have worked for the Speaker of the House? Because it came through Boston College, through that relationship—that's how come I did it. It was a good experience; it was D.C.

DePue: And what was Tip O'Neill's most famous political quote?

Reineke: "All politics is local." As a matter of fact, somebody just used that today. Yesterday or today I read something; someone used it in an article I was reading, and I was just chuckling about it. That will go down in history forever. (laughter)

DePue: Yeah. Of all the things he could be remembered for, that's the one that stuck, it seems.

Reineke: Yeah. It's not so bad, either. He knew how to get elected, and he was around for a long time.

May 21, 2009, 92-95. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁵ The contrast between moderate Illinois Republicans and the rightward shift of the Republican Party nationally is an occasional theme of the Edgar project. See Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 14-17; June 10, 2009, 92-94; June 22, 2009, 10; and Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 31.

DePue: So tell us a little bit about working on Grotberg's campaign.

Reineke: It was Grotberg's campaign, and then—

DePue: Is this 1980 now?

Reineke: This is 1980. Terri also had become one of the liaison lead coordinators for the Dave O'Neal U.S. Senate campaign against Alan Dixon, which is not unusual if you know how politics works. People can work for one politician and, during an election cycle, get appointed to work on someone else's campaign—work hand-in-hand, turn out the Republican vote. So I got to know Terri and her family and Senator Grotberg, and eventually wound up with responsibility for three counties, which meant I got to drive around and give out campaign material and go to different events. It was DeKalb and Kane; and I'm thinking McHenry was the other at the time, but I'm not positive. So I did that, with the plan that I would start thinking about applying to both graduate school and law school at some point.

Now, as you got more involved in the campaign, you'd go to the campaign office in downtown Chicago; you'd get kind of that energy, that buzz, that excitement. You're thinking your candidate could win. I also had in the back of my head, If I have to delay school, graduate or law school—because I hadn't really pulled the trigger on it—then I was leaning probably more towards law school in terms of practicality. I thought the JD or LLB could be quicker and might be an easier path to a career than the PhD, which would take longer. I thought I could always push it back to the following January, when the campaign was definitely done. So I had that fluidity, that option in my mind. The campaign was moving along. This is my first real experience—I don't mean going to events—

DePue: Can I get one clarification?

Reineke: Yes, sir.

DePue: Grotberg's campaign, or O'Neal's campaign?

Reineke: I'm sorry, it was O'Neal's Senate campaign. I was part of the Grotberg organization, but Terri and company were working for Dave O'Neal, so that's who I was really working for. I met Dave on the campaign trail once or twice. I was really getting into it because it was exciting, and I think the numbers—I guess we'd have to go back and look at them, but it didn't look like it was going to be a Dixon blowout over O'Neal that year. Around Labor Day, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a big weekend story, if I'm not mistaken, on Dave O'Neal's use of the Illinois state aircraft for campaign purposes. He was still the sitting incumbent lieutenant governor, so he had the ability to use the state plane. But as folks know, you have to be able to divide the costs of what the state pays for versus what the campaign fund would pay for. This goes back to 1980, so I need my memory refreshed, but—

DePue: My own memory is really foggy. Was Dixon running for reelection at that time?

Reineke: Dixon was secretary of state running for U.S. senator. I'm trying to remember whose seat it was at the time. Perhaps it was the Simon seat. Was it the Simon seat?

DePue: No, that would have been too early for the Simon seat.

Reineke: We'll have to check. What happened was the *Tribune* came out with this exposé, and once that hit—regardless of, “Oh, the campaign will reimburse the state of Illinois for campaign costs”—that was really the beginning of the end. In terms of his numbers, instead of rising, they just kind of flatlined, and O'Neal wound up losing. That's Labor Day, so within two months, he loses the election to Dixon.⁶

DePue: What did you learn that surprised you, out of that initial campaign that you were involved with?

Reineke: What did I learn? I learned about the monotony of it and how messages get repeated over and over, and why you need to do that. I learned that it's a lot of hard work, but I also know that I probably got a greater adrenaline rush and intellectual buzz from being involved in a campaign. It's sort of like eating candy or something that you probably shouldn't eat too much of. You just want to do more of it, and this is really cool—to use that corny word, I guess. That's why for me, what happened immediately—within the same week, I believe, of O'Neal's loss on Tuesday—I was told by Terri that Chris Atchison, Dave O'Neal's chief of staff as lieutenant governor, wanted to meet with me in downtown Chicago.

DePue: What was the first name there?

Reineke: Chris. Atchison, A-t-c-h-i-s-o-n. He later became the Iowa director of Public Health, and then I lost track of him. So I sat down with Chris, and I knew that this was about a possible job. This was a few days after the election, in downtown Chicago. I was offered the opportunity to become the administrative assistant to the lieutenant governor, and boy, did I think that was a big deal. (laughs)

DePue: I wanted to ask you. I can't imagine you were paid lots and lots of money while you were working for the O'Neal campaign.

Reineke: No, I wasn't. I was paid expenses, and I also had to drive a school bus. I had to get a job, and I had to have a job that offered me flexibility in terms of my

⁶ Dave O'Neal, the lieutenant governor, and Alan Dixon, the secretary of state, sought to fill the seat vacated by Democratic incumbent Adlai Stevenson III. The front-page *Tribune* story Reineke refers to ran even later in the campaign, on October 5, 1980.

hours so I could do political stuff. Early morning, you don't have to do much politically. The middle of the afternoon, picking the kids up. So I went and I learned how to drive a school bus. I had to get a CDL license.⁷ It was just a bit of a hoot. (DePue laughs) But anyway, I did that.

DePue: What were your parents thinking about your career choices at this time?

Reineke: Oh, they probably were glad I was involved in the campaign, and they knew I wanted to do something else from a school perspective. I think they were happy I was involved in the campaign because they saw me moving in a direction that said possible career, or at least something that was real. My parents—particularly my mother—is extremely patient about things like that, which I think I probably inherited in terms of our kids and what they want to do with their lives. But when the lieutenant governor's office job, the administrative assistant, opened up and I got offered the position, that was wonderful news. I was going to be moving to Springfield, Illinois, to be the AA to the lieutenant governor.

DePue: And have a real job.

Reineke: And have a real job. Real paycheck, state of Illinois employee. I guess I was on the payroll January one or whatever day I first started right after New Year's.

DePue: I'm guessing that up to this point in your life there wasn't too much time for dating or a social life. You'd already mentioned in college that certainly wasn't part of the cards.

Reineke: No, I went out with different people in college, but nothing permanent came out of that relationship. You just move on real fast. But I will tell you on a personal level, one of the very first people I met was the woman who became my wife, Janice. She worked as a secretary to Al Grosboll at the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council. So in my first few days in Springfield, because the lieutenant governor's office oversaw the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council, Chris and others said, "You need to go over and introduce yourself, your role; you'll be liaising with them." So Janice—I met her.

DePue: What's her maiden name?

Reineke: Janice Stivers. Janice had worked in the Walker administration; she worked with Jim Nowlan at the end of the Ogilvie administration; and then obviously worked for Mr. Grosboll, worked for Al.

DePue: You and Al must be about the same age, I would think. Maybe a couple years older?

⁷ Commercial Driver's License.

- Reineke: Yeah, I think Al might be a couple years older, but we're pretty close, a similar age.
- DePue: So he was moving up the political ladder at the same time you were, though he was a rung or two ahead of you, it sounds like.
- Reineke: Yeah, in a different position because Al had been involved in government before me.
- DePue: I think you're aware that I've already had the opportunity to interview him, several sessions.
- Reineke: Al's a great guy.
- DePue: And a colorful guy.
- Reineke: Al can tell the funniest stories, the funniest stories. I still chuckle when I talk to some of my colleagues, be it Mike Lawrence or Andy Foster, Mark Boozell—any of those guys—and Al Grosboll stories will inevitably come up. Good joke-teller, good person.
- DePue: What surprised you about finally getting that first real, permanent job in a political environment in Springfield?
- Reineke: How unbusy the lieutenant governor's office really was. It was as if the lieutenant governor had to wait around for the governor or the governor's senior staff to assign some sort of project or responsibility to them. I don't mean to (laughs) denigrate the office. I think it's really driven by the relationship of the two principals, any governor and any lieutenant governor. We know there was obviously friction between Dan Walker and Neil Hartigan. I don't think, from the Thompson-O'Neal perspective, that it was ever at that level, but I don't think it was necessarily one where Dave was an inner-circle confidant of the governor.

So what that all plays out to is you had a staff that sometimes kind of just did things as assigned. It could be the lieutenant governor's going to be making an economic development tour, or visiting coal mine sites or abandoned coal mine sites—that kind of thing. That's really what my biggest eye-opener was, that the office, to me, sounded extremely prestigious. As I look back on all my years in two different gubernatorial administrations, I think I probably had more empathy for other lieutenant governors, whether it was George Ryan or Bob Kustra, knowing that that office really depends on what the person at the top says: "This is what I want you to do, and this is what I want you to be responsible for." Unlike Indiana, where I live now, where I believe the lieutenant governor still is in charge of their version of the commerce department or economic development; there are particular assigned duties rather than just kind of an at-will, "This is what I'd like you to do."

DePue: Your specific duty, again, in his office?

Reineke: The administrative assistant to the lieutenant governor. So what did that mean? That meant I traveled around with him. Sometimes if we were to opine on legislation, that meant I liaised with the Abandoned Mined Lands Council. There was a guy named Brad Evilsizer. He used to be the head of the Department of Mines and Minerals. He was a gubernatorial appointment of Governor Thompson, but because Mines and Minerals, coal mining, was so connected to what Abandoned Mines did, I'd liaison with that department, with him.

DePue: You've mentioned Mines and Minerals, that whole process, (Reineke laughs) Abandoned Mines. Is that a piece that Thompson had decided to let the lieutenant governor work with?

Reineke: Yeah. There may have been an executive order that was signed to have the AMLRC assigned to the lieutenant governor. I think the lieutenant governor—you're taxing my memory a little here, Mark—was the chairman of the council, and there were other members on the council. Other state agencies may have had legislative input or not, I don't recall. But that's really why it was there, coupled with the fact that Dave was from St. Clair County. You had in parts of St. Clair, but particularly in southern Illinois, a lot of coal mining, so it was natural from a geographical perspective to have him play that kind of role.⁸

DePue: My guess is that it got a lot more attention back then than it would today. It was a hot political issue—what to do with all of this reclaimed mine land.

Reineke: Yeah, yeah, it was. I think it goes to the whole issue of coal in general in this country: clean coal versus dirty coal, Illinois coal versus Wyoming coal. Back then it was really—if you think about downstate Illinois, particularly southern Illinois—the life blood for a lot of those counties and towns down there, in terms of where people were employed.

DePue: And an industry in decline at the time, correct?

Reineke: Yeah. I don't think we thought of it quite like that, (laughter) but yeah, when you look back on it, I think that was—I don't want to say the beginning of the end, but the beginning of a lot of the troubles.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about Dave O'Neal, his personality, his character.

Reineke: I guess my take-away on Dave was he was a very unique person, kind of a tough guy—former U.S. Marine, former sheriff of St. Clair County.

⁸ For the reason behind the state legislature's decision to place responsibility for the AMLRC under the lieutenant governor, see Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, May 20, 2009, 3-5.

DePue: Was he a World War II vet?

Reineke: I don't think so. He was a younger guy.

DePue: Not Vietnam? Older than that, maybe?

Reineke: Maybe older than that. But that's what I recall about Dave's personality. So much more socially, philosophically conservative than Jim Thompson. Back then, governor and lieutenant governor ran separately. Dave won the primary, so that would have been '78, because that was the first four-year term after the two-year constitutional terms ended. Dave was a bit of a—character, I guess is the right word. He was very gregarious, nice guy, told a lot of jokes. He and Mr. Grosboll used to get along. (DePue laughs) But he was really down to earth. I think he was antsy for the next thing, and I don't think that the office of the lieutenant governor was really the right fit for him, because he was dependent, as I said, on assignments from the governor's office.

DePue: That's a place that oftentimes people who are politically ambitious go, and then as you suggest here, (laughs) they're not very happy when they have higher ambitions.

Reineke: Right. And think about it: he's the lieutenant governor who gets elected with Jim Thompson and then for whatever reason decides to run for the U.S. Senate, so that kind of tells you right there that he's looking for the next step up. That's the nature of that office, in part; it's a political stepping-stone. But he was somebody that, as we saw, within a matter of months just felt that the grass was greener and did resign and leave the office.

DePue: What did he leave to?

Reineke: I'm trying to remember. There were a number of different jobs. I thought he went into the private sector, something to do with aviation, and I think he wound up out in Arizona after that—he and his brother... But I don't know if immediately there was a position that he went to, rather than something later.

DePue: Did it surprise you when he stepped down?

Reineke: It surprised us all, number one. I think it surprised the whole state because somebody basically said, "I'm bored with my job"—that's what it came down to—and you don't really hear public officials saying, "I'm bored with this; I think I'll go do something else." Even if they are, they don't (laughs) say it. And on top of that, you normally don't resign. But Dave did. You know what? It sounds a little corny. He was a person of action, a man of action. He always wanted to move and to do something. More important than surprising me, I think, (laughs) was the fact that my reaction was, What the hell have I gotten myself into? I'm not going to graduate school; I'm not going to law school;

I'm sitting in Springfield, Illinois, and I don't know what the hell I'm going to do for my career moving forward. This is definitely a problem.⁹

DePue: Let me see if I got this straight, then. The lieutenant governor resigns. My understanding is there was no new lieutenant governor appointed. We're going to wait for the next election.

Reineke: That's right.

DePue: So what does the staff for the former lieutenant governor do? There's no need for it to exist. Is that basically how it works out?

Reineke: Basically. I'm trying to recall the timing. It may have been June that they eventually shut the office down, wound things down, closed the books. For a brief period, I went over as the assistant director at the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council. Everyone that had worked in the lieutenant governor's office kind of wound up being placed somewhere in the administration, because you were part of the Thompson-O'Neal administration. Frankly, with his resignation, it was just up to the good will of the governor's office to put people in other jobs and figure out what you're going to do in the long run. So that's how I wound up going over there for a brief period.

DePue: Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council. Is that where you got to meet Taylor Pensoneau, as well?

Reineke: I think I knew Taylor, actually, from the lieutenant governor's office, because—

DePue: He was working as a lobbyist by that time, I believe.

Reineke: Yeah, but also because Taylor would have intersected with Dave O'Neal a lot.

DePue: What was your specific assignment while you were there?

Reineke: Over at the Abandoned Mined Lands? Basically to help out the staff and do a lot of the liaisons with legislators. For example, Sen. Vince Demuzio, of Carlinville; Vince had a lot of interest in reclamation issues. So because I came out of a political/government/legislative environment, that was very comfortable for me. I'm trying to remember when Al left and Sue Massie took over, but it was during this period where there was that change. Al was more astute politically because of his prior knowledge and involvement in Illinois politics. Sue, I think, was a land planner by career design, so Sue did not necessarily have the same kind of sensitivity or understanding of how the

⁹ O'Neal (R-Belleville), a former pharmacist and Republican sheriff in St. Clair County, became only the third lieutenant governor in Illinois history to resign his post, believing that the position should either be given enhanced powers or abolished. *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1981, 4.

political process worked in terms of what you should do, what you shouldn't do, and how to maneuver and move when you're running an agency. So my job was really to help the agency and Sue maneuver that map, that minefield, no pun intended.

DePue: Somewhere in here I know you got married. Lay that out for us in terms of the timing.

Reineke: I decided this was not for me long-term, the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council, and I began to reach out to different people. Chris Atchison helped set up a meeting for me with Bob Kjellander. I don't know if Bob was Thompson's legislative director at that point, but Bob was going to be the head of the Thompson reelect campaign for 1982. So sometime fall of '81, I sat down with Bob and others—Greg Baise, Mark Frech—and interviewed to become a field representative for the Thompson reelect campaign for 1982.

DePue: What was Kjellander's background before that?

Reineke: I think Bob had been in the Ogilvie administration, and he may have done personnel in Thompson's office. But I thought his last position was head of legislative affairs for Thompson before he resigned from that position to become a campaign manager for 1982.

DePue: And was he from Springfield?

Reineke: I don't remember. Bob may have been suburban Chicago. I'm not positive. He lived in Springfield at the time, though, obviously.

DePue: I know he later on became the chair of the Republican Party for Sangamon County, so that's why I'm thinking he's...

Reineke: He became the national Republican committeeman for the state of Illinois at the RNC. Then he became the treasurer at the RNC, and that's when some of the controversy erupted through Bob's issues with the Blagojevich administration later on. Andy McKenna and others—Bill Brady—called for his resignation as chair, but that's years down the road.

DePue: I think what I'm referring to is many years down the road. I guess I lost the thread, though, of what you were doing with Kjellander.

Reineke: We're finishing 1981 and I get hired as a field representative, starting January 1, 1982, to spend that year as one of five or six regional field representatives; that's how the state was broken up geographically. I was originally assigned the central Illinois territory. Then when I came to work that first day in early January 1982, I was told, "No, you're going to be handling southern Illinois, the forty-seven southernmost counties."

DePue: Forty-seven?

Reineke: It was forty-seven, yeah. I had the most counties. Basically, if you cut the state in half, everything south of Springfield. That was quite an adventure that year.

DePue: For the Thompson administration—the Thompson campaign.

Reineke: For the Thompson campaign, yep. And we didn't have a lieutenant governor at the time, because Dave had resigned the year before, in 1981. Then there was a three-way contest for lieutenant governor. Jim Thompson had designated George Ryan, who was the Speaker of the House, as his endorsed candidate for lieutenant governor. On the more conservative side, you had Don Totten, a state rep and state senator, running for lieutenant governor. You had Susan Catania; Susan was a legislator on the more progressive wing of the Republican Party. So you almost had Ryan placed right in the middle there.

As part of the campaign, our job was to encourage Republican organizations around the state to be supportive of George Ryan's candidacy for lieutenant governor. You'd have to walk in parades with Ryan. Sometimes you would have to represent the campaign. One night in Lawrenceville, Illinois, in 1982, I had to get up and speak on Ryan's behalf, and (laughs) Susan Catania was there—I think Don Totten was there too. I probably spoke a little too aggressively in support of George, because I heard later that the county chairman was mad that I was basically so rude to the other candidates that were there. I didn't think I was rude at the time. Nineteen eighty-two—I drove around fifty thousand miles that year in my little Chevy Chevette and rent-a-cars. I got to meet some of the most interesting, colorful characters in southern Illinois politics, from C.L. McCormick down in Vienna; to Bob Winchester; to folks over in the Metro East area; guys like Cecil "Wimpy" Weedman, longtime Republican county chairman over in southeast Illinois.

DePue: What was the last name there?

Reineke: Weedman. Leo Slater was another county chairman. These guys had been in for years. It wasn't just a two-year job. They were county chairmen. Oh gosh, who was the state rep? A bigger fellow, nice guy. Clyde. He was state rep. Clyde Robbins, Republican from Fairfield.

DePue: You're not thinking Clyde Choate?

Reineke: Not Clyde Choate. No, I know Clyde Choate.

DePue: And he's the wrong party for you.

Reineke: Wrong party. Yeah, obviously that was all Republican. Just a quick aside: I remember driving through snowstorms through Pope County, way down in southern Illinois. I remember driving back on I-55 south of Springfield one Friday—we were going to meet at the campaign headquarters—and I got into

ice on the road; I got into a three-way car accident, and it was just awful. It was just a very intense year. Layered on top of all that, Janice and I, my wife, had started to live together the previous six months or so, as I was leaving the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Council and joining the Thompson campaign. So we decided to get married by a justice of the peace on May 20, 1982, in downtown Springfield, in the middle of the campaign.

DePue: Sounds less than romantic.

Reineke: Yeah, it was practical. (laughter) It was practical.

DePue: Speaking of practical, what the heck is a kid from Long Island doing down (laughs) in the southern part of Illinois?

Reineke: That was my reaction, too, because back then I still had a bit more of a New York accent. I think it was the fact that one of my counterparts in the campaign, who had worked with Bob before, didn't want to drive around southern Illinois. I think it was sort of the last man in—me—that's what you got, you got southern Illinois. But I loved it, I really did. Three people down there, Dorothy Lehr, who Mike Lawrence knows; Miki Cooper and her husband Bob Cooper, down in Harrisburg. Some of them became lifelong friends and acquaintances, and we still stay in touch with some of those folks.

DePue: How much did you get to deal with Governor Thompson himself? Did you get to know him then?

Reineke: Different campaign stops. He'd come up and say, "Hey, Gene-o, how you doing? Good job."

DePue: Gene-o?

Reineke: Yeah, I think it's a term of affection that a number of people have used with my name over the years. But I got to know him. Not like, What do you think about policy or a piece of legislation, but rather, Hey, here's a young guy out there busting his tail for the campaign. I'd see him regularly. Got to meet a fellow named Jim Skilbeck who used to do advance for us, Woody Mosgers—they were the advance guys for Jim Thompson. Got to know Dave Gilbert, who was the press secretary.

DePue: Tell us about the difference in the campaigning style for Jim Thompson, who's widely regarded as the master by that time, and somebody like George Ryan.

Reineke: With Thompson, it just came so natural. With George, I think it was more forced. I don't think George particularly enjoyed doing it. I remember one Friday night in some county—like maybe Scott County, south of Springfield, not too far—doing a parade with George. George was a little bit grumpy in terms of the fact that he had to spend his Friday night doing a parade in the

very small town. But that went with the territory. Versus Thompson—whether he felt it inside or not, you never felt that he wasn't enjoying himself, because he was such a natural. He was a guy that could light up a room; he was able to dominate. Some of it's personality, some of it's theatrics, but he was so good at that. I remember years later, talking with Jim Edgar in the car in downtown Chicago. We'd just left something, and we talked about how Thompson just was a master at it. He was just so natural, versus Jim Edgar, who had to learn some of that.¹⁰ But back on George, yeah, George is George. He's the kind of personality that—Speaker of the House, backroom conversations, cigar-smoking—versus Thompson, who was much more about getting out there. People, I think, really felt that he had a grand time when he was out campaigning.

DePue: Did you ever pick up how Thompson felt about George Ryan personally?

Reineke: Obviously that's a difficult question to answer because you've got to do it in the context of the environment we've seen in the last several years since George was convicted, and Thompson has been his attorney. Here's my assessment: I think it made practical political sense at the time for Jim Thompson to select and endorse George Ryan as his anointed, I guess, candidate for lieutenant governor. Why get involved in that fight? Because it made sense; because he was the Speaker and had been Speaker of the House, you needed that cooperation. I think that their relationship grew from a friendship perspective over the years. I'm not sure—and I can't speak for Jim Thompson nor George Ryan, obviously—it was necessarily anything more than politically advantageous for both of them early on; that there was any true personal camaraderie. I can't go to that. I think it was more analytically looking at this; it was much more practical politics than it was about, oh, these are two people that are personally close as well as politically close.

DePue: The other up-and-comer, if you will, in the Republican Party at that time was obviously Jim Edgar, who Thompson had appointed as his secretary of state. When he had the option, he appointed Edgar and not George Ryan, who it was rumored wanted that job.

Reineke: That's right. It's also interesting how well this comes together for me on a personal level, because November '80, O'Neal loses to Dixon; Dixon has to give up being the Illinois secretary of state—opens up that position for Jim Edgar, who was Thompson's legislative director. So Jim Thompson appoints Jim Edgar, in January 1981, the new Illinois secretary of state. *Fortuitous* is probably not the right word—but kind of interesting how I work for the one guy who loses and then wind up working for another guy and get to know him. Over my Thompson years I got to know Jim Edgar quite well and then

¹⁰ For discussion of the difference in personal style between Edgar and Thompson, see Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, May 29, 2009, 92 and June 10, 2009, 84-87; Carter Hendren, interviews by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 35-36 and May 7, 2009, 35-37; Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, August 13, 2009, 5-6.

wound up working for him in the 1990s, down the road. But back on the appointment, yes, Jim Thompson selected the person who, frankly, could get elected to that office—I won't say "reelect" because it was appointed the first—because he was the next generation in terms of the Republican Party. I think it was definitely the right decision.

DePue: When did you get to know Edgar? Was it during the '82 campaign?

Reineke: Yeah, I got to know Edgar, the secretary at the time; he'd go out and he'd be campaigning. I was a field rep. Thompson wasn't at as many of events that some of the down-ticket candidates were, because he was the governor and obviously had more limited opportunity in terms of the schedule. So I got to meet him [Edgar] and talk to him and things like that; that's how I got to know him. Then eventually over the years, he was reelected and I was in the governor's office at the time. He had even said to me at different times that there may be a possibility to come work for him. It just didn't happen, but I got to know him and got to admire him and appreciate him.

DePue: The 1982 gubernatorial campaign in Illinois was an interesting one. If you're looking at all of the campaigns that Thompson had as governor, I would suspect that was the one that was the tightest and the toughest for him. So tell us a little about that.

Reineke: Now, I'm in downstate Illinois, so I really don't have a good sense of what's going on in the Cook County/Chicago area at the time. There were a lot of issues where registration within the African-American community was pretty high. This is the time, I think, Harold Washington was running for mayor or getting ready to run for mayor. You had Vrdolyak as the Cook County Democratic chairman, with "Punch 10," in terms of election day.¹¹ You were also coming off a time where the economy wasn't doing particularly well in Illinois; we were in a bit of a recession. So I don't think that we ever thought collectively, from Bob Kjellander or Phil O'Connor... Phil had been brought in as the campaign's chairman to work with Bob. He was in the cabinet at the time; I want to maybe even say director of insurance.¹² Phil got brought in when it got a little bumpy at some point during the campaign in terms of the polling numbers, where it looked like, because of the economy, people—

DePue: We haven't mentioned yet who Thompson's opponent is.

Reineke: No. His opponent was Adlai Stevenson.

DePue: The third.

¹¹ In 1982, Edward Vrdolyak was Chicago's 10th Ward alderman, city council president, and chair of the Cook County Democratic Party. Vrdolyak coined the Punch 10 slogan to promote the straight-ticket ballot option in support of Democrats. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 88.

¹² Philip R. O'Connor was director of the Department of Insurance.

Reineke: The third, Adlai Stevenson III. I think the feeling was that it was going to be a tough campaign, but Thompson was going to get reelected. I think that's the bottom-line feeling. And I think that by the time you got to '82 election night, people were just surprised as hell that it wound up being 5,074 votes. I don't think we saw that coming.

DePue: What was your impression of Stevenson as a campaigner?

Reineke: Not particularly charismatic. Great name. Not somebody that you felt, Oh my gosh, this guy could be a real threat. If I step back from the historical perspective and look at Thompson versus Stevenson in '82 and Edgar–Hartigan '90, I don't think I felt the same way about the Democratic nominee. I think at the end of the day, the economic recession and problems Illinois was having at the time were problematic for Thompson in terms of getting reelected. He'd already been in six years or coming up on six years.

But I have to tell you, I felt pretty good about it because if I went back and looked at the records, I think we collectively—in southern Illinois, a traditionally Democratic part of the state—actually carried more counties for Thompson than we had expected. So it's a little hard to have a state perspective at times, other than what you hear at campaign staff meetings, when you're out there living in a particular geography, dealing with folks that don't really have a sense or understanding of what's happening in Chicago and Cook County at the time.

DePue: The dynamics of the Illinois Democratic Party at that time—maybe I'm making too much of this—are kind of similar to the 1960s Democratic Party in the United States. You've got the Cook County Democrats, and that's one flavor of being a Democrat; then you've got the southern Illinois Democrats, and that's kind of a different animal, was it not?

Reineke: Yeah, of course it was very different, but I think at the end of the day, there was always cooperation in general between downstate or southern Illinois Democrats and the Cook County Democratic Party led by Richard J. Daley and others. It was always the eight-thousand-pound gorilla—whatever metaphor I want to use. That's the Democratic Party in Illinois; it was always Chicago and, to a lesser degree, Cook County, just because of population numbers—not that there weren't other areas.

DePue: And the power in the Democratic Party in the south before that time had been Paul Powell, and of course he's deceased at that time.

Reineke: He was gone.

DePue: Was there anybody who replaced him in terms of clout in the southern part of the state?

Reineke: You mentioned Clyde Choate earlier. I guess Clyde for a while. Let's see who else was around. This was before Glenn Poshard. Obviously Paul Simon, but from a bit of a different perspective. There was a state legislator, Jim Rea, at the time. I don't think you had one person that really, at least from my time, stood out, from a historical perspective.

DePue: Tell us about the end of that campaign.

Reineke: The end of the campaign was election night. A lot of surprise. I don't want to say pointing fingers, but I think there was a great deal of stress and tension at campaign headquarters. As I said, I don't think anybody saw it coming. What happened really was a campaign that then went on till January of 1983, when the Illinois Supreme Court made their decision to allow the inauguration of Jim Thompson; there had been discovery recounts of the state. The best way to describe it was, it was almost like a surreal November-December where nobody knew what was going to happen next. Tons of lawyers involved around the state.

In that time, I got permission, from the fellow that I reported to directly at the time—Matt Smith, who answered to Bob Kjellander and to Phil O'Connor—to take our honeymoon. As I mentioned, we had gotten married in May of '82, and it's now post-election date. We went for two weeks down to Jamaica, with their permission. There wasn't a whole lot you could do, because it was the legal process that was involved now.

DePue: I'm trying to put myself in your position. Okay, if Thompson wins, I come back and probably have a good job, but if Thompson loses...

Reineke: That's right. That's it exactly. You just characterized my thoughts exactly at the time. That was truly a tipping point for me. If Thompson lost, I would have had to essentially reinvent my career and do something else. I was married at the time, but I found when you're young like that, it's not like at this stage in my life. Back then—use that cliché—it is what it is, and you deal with it, because I couldn't do a whole heck of a lot about it.

DePue: What was Thompson's feeling? Was he confident he was going to be the winner at the end of the day?

Reineke: I never saw him otherwise, but I didn't have that level of exposure to him where I would know his feelings or have the conversations with him that I had when I was on the governor's staff years later.

DePue: What was the specific nature of the lawsuit and the challenge that was going on?

Reineke: I think it was specifically accepting ballots from certain areas. If you went and did a discovery recount in different electoral regions, districts, would it show enough divergence from the actual election night [results]? I think that was the

fundamental issue: do you go to a full recount, or do you say there's enough sampling here that shows what we counted again through discovery relatively reflected the election night results of 5,074? I think that was the essence of it.

DePue: Are there any particular geographical areas that come to mind?

Reineke: I don't remember, to be honest with you.

DePue: Ultimately, Thompson's declared the winner, so you have a much better feel for your own future. What did happen to you after he won election?

Reineke: I believe it was probably sometime in December—we had conversations about if I would be interested in talking to the governor about being his scheduler. I knew at some point that if this turned out for Jim Thompson in terms of the Supreme Court ruling, I would have a job in the governor's office and would do scheduling. So I was ecstatic. I think part of that came from the fact it was an acknowledgement that I did a good job as a field representative; that he and others over me, Bob or Phil, thought I did a job that gained me their respect. If I had screwed it up, I don't think I would have been offered to work in the governor's office, in scheduling. That's when I started, right after this all got settled, after the inauguration in January of '83.

DePue: What were your own personal aspirations at that time?

Reineke: My personal aspirations were to do a good job as scheduler, survive in the governor's office, and see where I could go from a career perspective there, what other things... This is the big time for me. I was on the edge of the big time, being a campaign field representative, but now I was in the governor's office, and that's a big deal. So I was pretty proud of myself, having survived the O'Neal years—and that's the way I would have described it, or “the O'Neal experience”—and managing to get through a campaign that was really historic in Illinois history, and now I was in the governor's office. That's not ego as much as it's about, I'm glad I was able to do a good job and not screw it up.

DePue: Anybody who aspires for a political career, especially talking about things like governor or congressman or senator—there's always the factor of ego involved. Was that part of your aspirations at that time?

Reineke: I don't think I focused on that at all, because it was really about doing a good job for the governor. The governor, whoever it is, is such an immense personality to a staff person—particularly a younger staff person—that you're driven by: how do you do right by them; how do you learn to get along with other very strong personalities, who are also politically driven, on that staff? I also had as my initial mentor inside that office, a guy named Art Quern, who was the chief of staff. Art had been head of Public Aid, whom Jim Thompson had brought from Nelson Rockefeller's administration back in New York. Art was just a very calm, fair, intellectual, savvy guy that understood the political

side but really didn't take sides or play favorites. He really was, in a lot of ways, the model for me, when I became chief of staff, for how I should operate under Jim Edgar: as Art Quern did for Jim Thompson. But I was the scheduler at the time. Art allowed me a lot of leeway. I dealt with the governor directly. I would let Art know what was going on, but—you really came to admire him.

DePue: You met Janice in this environment. What was her view about your chosen career path?

Reineke: She's got the Springfield bug. She knows all the personalities and characters down there. We wanted to try to start a family and build a life, and that's 1983. Yeah, we were probably trying to have a family at that time. We didn't realize till later that we couldn't have kids—at least that's what we thought at the time—but that goes down a different path.

DePue: You got to know Thompson, I would assume.

Reineke: Yeah.

DePue: First as a campaigner and now working for him as governor. Differences that you saw?

Reineke: I've always felt that Jim Thompson, on the external side, has this public persona, this gregarious, larger-than-life personality. On the private side, or when he's not out in public, he's much more cerebral, quiet, pleasant, nice—but I never felt the intensity with the private Jim Thompson as you do with the public Jim Thompson. It really kind of struck me, because I think we have these images of people, that you always see what you get with someone all the time, and that's not necessarily the case. I've always juxtaposed in my own mind, rightly or wrongly, the public persona of Jim Thompson and the public persona of Jim Edgar with how they were privately. I always felt that Jim Edgar was more open on a personal basis as a private person, and Jim Thompson was more closed. That's not a criticism; it's just sort of an observation. It was just different. I guess I didn't realize or wasn't expecting that, wow, you have this kind of larger-than-life personality, but behind closed doors he's a much different kind of person. That was one of the first human learnings for me about what it takes to be a successful politician. There is an element of theatrics to all this; some of it's natural and some of it's learned.

DePue: Well, the comparison between the two is always made in terms of their public persona and how they contrasted with each other.

Reineke: Yeah, and I always had a mirror view, which was the private side. Part of it could have been my age, too. Remember, I worked for Jim Thompson when I was younger. You put another ten years on there and it makes a difference. I'm in a different role, so maybe I could have more of those real, honest, direct conversations with Jim Edgar—working for him as an executive

assistant or on a campaign, or working as a chief of staff—than when I was with the Thompson administration in the governor’s office and, even later, in the cabinet.

DePue: What was Thompson’s managerial style?

Reineke: Interesting question. It was so fascinating to watch. He would let ideas, and personalities that went along with those ideas, bubble up to the surface and have a—I’d describe it as sort of a menu of options in front of him. So you may have Paula Wolff, Greg Baise, Jim Reilly, Rich McClure, Dave Gilbert, and Dave Fields, all expressing different views, and then Thompson would make a decision about that. I look at the Edgar personality or the Edgar management style, and it was much more consensus-building. I never felt there was really consensus-building—and I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad thing—just a different kind of operating style. I don’t know if he took that out of his days as U.S. attorney or whatever, but I did notice that.

I remember one time after Art Quern had announced he was resigning. Jim Reilly was legal counsel, Greg Baise was personnel, Rich McClure was policy, and I was the scheduler, and they all wanted to be considered for chief of staff. Art had gone, I think, to Aon by this time—had resigned, said he’s going to go to the private sector. Thompson—I would go to meet with him to go through the schedule, and he laughed; he’d say, “Well, what’s the troika up to today?” (DePue laughs) because they all had agendas. Again, understandably, but they all wanted to meet with him to push or advocate for whatever program or issue that they needed decided. So you had three people, three very powerful, intelligent—I’m friends with all of them to this day and stay in touch with every one of them—but they all wanted that opportunity to get the next leg up to be considered for chief of staff.

That went on for a while, too, which goes back to my reflection on his management style. That didn’t bother Jim Thompson; to let the cream rise; let everybody kind of offer their viewpoint; maybe, for lack of a better expression, duke it out, work it out; see who is going to come out on top, and then let him decide. I don’t think that ever bothered him. Some people may not be comfortable with that kind of management style. I think that was a good illustration, because he acknowledged that when he said that to me that one time. It always stuck with me: “How’s the troika doing today?” and I knew exactly what he meant.

DePue: (laughs) That’s fascinating. And who won that struggle?

Reineke: Jim did, Jim Reilly. Eventually, Rich went off to work for John Ashcroft in Missouri, Greg went to become secretary of transportation, and Jim became the chief of staff.¹³

DePue: This is probably as good an opportunity as any, then. Tell us a little bit about Jim Reilly as chief of staff.

Reineke: Jim and I actually got along very well. He had worked with a woman named Kathy Selcke. Kathy and I worked together as deputies to Jim when he became Thompson's Chief of Staff. They had worked together when he was a state representative and she was on the House Republican staff. Jim became the chief of staff. Jim is extremely smart, but he also doesn't suffer fools gladly. I'm a bit of a perfectionist; I really always want to get things buttoned down and right, and I'm also not somebody that kind of falls back to the "Oh well, it'll work out" position. It's like, no, we have to make it work out. I think my personality complemented Jim's personality. So as he got to know people as chief of staff, we had our moments where there was high anxiety, to quote (DePue laughs) the Mel Brooks movie title. There were moments like that, but at the end of the day, Jim Reilly was so smart and had such a keen sense of what was achievable and not achievable politically. He became, in my mind, the initial driver for the whole concept of the Build Illinois infrastructure program in terms of selling bonds and investing in the state's infrastructure: transportation, sewer, water, et cetera.

DePue: You described Thompson's own management style: let the underlings, if you will, kind of sort things out themselves.

Reineke: Yeah, and rise.

DePue: Jim Reilly's personality the way you're describing it—he's going to impose some more structure or discipline on that process?

Reineke: Definitely. Yes, that's a very good way to put it. Not that Jim was not open to other ideas and viewpoints, because he was, but at the end of the day, Jim would make a decision. With a reelect coming up in 1986—with Adlai Stevenson and the LaRouchie factor—Jim went off for a few days to write the whole concept of Build Illinois, which they had talked about with the governor. He kind of put it together. He may tell you he did it over a weekend. That was the impression I was left with; that he went off and thought of this idea he and the governor had decided to move forward with. So that's right, I think the fact that he had a strong personality—didn't mean he always won. Jim Thompson could overrule him or decide to go in a different direction. But I think he provided a counterbalance, as the chief, to Paula, and Paula to him. They got along with one another, but they were both strong personalities.

¹³ Despite McClure's departure, he was not forgotten. He returned to assist Edgar in the closing weeks of his first gubernatorial campaign in 1990, and Edgar, who held great respect for McClure, asked him to be his first chief of staff. Jim Edgar, interviews by Mark DePue, September 2, 2009, 54-55 and November 17, 2009, 10-12.

DePue: What was Paula's position?

Reineke: Paula was head of policy—another person I have the utmost respect for.

DePue: I wonder if I could ask if you have any anecdotes—you said that Reilly didn't suffer fools well—that would illustrate any of that.

Reineke: Yeah, I do, but I don't want to talk about them. (DePue laughs) Here's why: Over the years as I've gotten older, I've watched how I deal with people and how my patience has grown. I think that if you went back and looked at some of the times that Jim got mad at my colleagues, other staff people, if he had to do it over he probably would not have gotten that mad. So did I see him get angry and do things that in hindsight he probably would not have done again? Yeah, I did. But I also think that could be said about myself at different points in my career. I think when you're in the middle of the fishbowl there and the intensity is so hot, that for people to essentially say, Oh, I screwed up; I didn't do this, or I did that, it's... I'm not excusing it, but I'm also not criticizing him for it, because I get it. I get it.

DePue: Okay, fair enough. How long did you stay as scheduler, and where did you move after that?

Reineke: Sometime in 1984 I went over to become the head of boards and commissions and followed Kevin Wright in that position. So I'm going to guess I was probably in scheduling for a year and a half or so, approximately. I did that, and that was interesting, too, because you really got to know the whole network of influentials in the state—be they Thompson supporters, be they Republicans, be they Democrats—because most of the boards are pretty evenly divided. You have to have so many Republicans, so many Democrats. People that are interested in everything, from the arts...

So I have a funny little anecdote to remember: it taught me about the power of divided government, or the importance of divided government. I learned about the legislative branch more than I ever thought I would, when I was with boards and commissions. You might ask me why. I remember sitting one day—I don't remember the particulars—but I had to make some recommendations to the governor, for the Illinois Arts Council. I would go meet with the governor; we'd go over to the mansion, have a drink in the backyard, talk, relax, and then I'd go through all these hundreds and hundreds of pages and résumés and match up an appointment that's open with the number of candidates that were available.

Well, there were some appointments in the Illinois Arts Council, and Shirley Madigan, who I still know today—we exchange Christmas cards—called me up and said, "Here are a bunch of people that I'm interested in." I came from a more partisan perspective at the time, whether that's a reflection of the campaign in the past or whatever. So I essentially was prepared to not

submit all of Shirley's recommendations to the governor. I learned afterwards that somehow—I guess the Speaker had mentioned it to someone else in the governor's office—the long and short of it was I understood that Shirley, as the chairperson of the Illinois Arts Council, was very influential in her role, and she was also married to the Speaker of the House. It's really hard to divide all of those roles because they all kind of meld behind the scenes. So as it was explained to me, you really do need to pay attention to what, in this case the chairperson, Shirley, recommends in terms of appointments. That was a bipartisan legislative learning for me.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that even at that time, Madigan was one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful Democrat in the state?

Reineke: I would say so. I'll tell you—having worked and watched Speaker Madigan, Mike Madigan, over the years, the guy is a brilliant politician; he's very smart. Frankly, there were times in the later Edgar years that I was more comfortable having conversations about things like the budget or legislative business with Speaker Madigan than with the Republican leadership—knowing who you could go to and understand what their position was going to be at the end of the day. I got to know Speaker Madigan during the Thompson years and think very highly of him, even to this day.

DePue: How long were you with the Office of Boards and Commissions?

Reineke: Until we decided to form, in the governor's office, a more efficient model, and it became the Office of Public Affairs. The Office of Public Affairs, which had not been [in existence] before, essentially brought a lot of the non-policy, non-legislative functions of the governor's office together; so scheduling and advance, and I guess even Boards and Commissions, could be considered that. There were other people I would oversee in these roles, who then followed me in these jobs: Matt Davidson on Boards and Commissions, and Josh Grafton in scheduling. I'd work with Jim Skilbeck, as I mentioned earlier. It was really to get some better efficiency out of it, to streamline the number of direct reports that were interacting with the governor. So that's '85.

DePue: I hear "public affairs," and I think about what a press secretary would do, and apparently you're describing something that's quite different from that.

Reineke: Yeah. I think it was because the governor's office rolled out this new position, this new job. It was not as we now traditionally would look at a head of public affairs, which you could look at either from a communications perspective or a governmental relations perspective—particularly if you're in the private sector.

DePue: And how long did you serve in that capacity?

Reineke: I served in that capacity until I was asked to and accepted the position of director of Build Illinois, which I essentially did for all of 1986, because

things were functioning fairly efficiently in terms of the various components that made up public affairs. After the Build Illinois program had been announced publicly—run day-to-day by Mark Huddle, who was part of Paula Wolff’s policy staff; this is very early on in the program—Mark did not appear at a Senate legislative hearing about the program. Because Mark didn’t appear, there became a news brouhaha; Sen. Howie Carroll was upset. In fairness to Mark, in defense of Mark, I believe Mark had been instructed (laughs) not to appear by our legislative office—at least that was the impression I had. So it was hard to get mad at Mark for not showing up to a legislative hearing, if you were told by the legislative folks, don’t show up there. Because it became a public story about the governor’s office refusing to appear at a Senate legislative hearing, Jim and I had the conversation where I became the head of Build Illinois overnight.

It was not a pleasant experience, because overnight I had to get tutored by Bob Mandeville—Dr. Bob Mandeville, head of the Bureau of the Budget—and his deputy, Ed Welk, on how bonds and financing and all that good stuff, including the actual program, worked. That really wasn’t my forte at the time, but I think there was a feeling that I was sensitive enough to the legislative process, and I think there was enough trust by Governor Thompson and Jim Reilly in my abilities to not muck things up, that I was given that position. And I remember that first hearing I had to go to—because it made the newspapers then—I didn’t answer very many questions. They’d ask me a specific question about, What kind of interest rate on this bond, and I replied, “Really, I just started yesterday; I don’t really know.” They weren’t very pleased with me, but I escaped with my head in—

DePue: It strikes me you’re still a pretty young guy at this time.

Reineke: Yeah, it was ’86, so I was thirty years old then.

DePue: And trusted with one of the things closest to the heart of Governor Thompson, was it not?

Reineke: Yeah, it really was, because it became the centerpiece for the campaign.

DePue: I think we need to have you explain a little bit more about what Build Illinois was.

Reineke: Build Illinois was a 2.3 billion-dollar infrastructure renewal program. There were going to be 1.3 billion in new bonds sold from the state of Illinois, which would in turn fund state and local infrastructure projects. Then there was another component of Build Illinois; the other billion that took us to the 2.3 billion became the umbrella program for elements that had to do with infrastructure of state agencies. So you could have pieces of the Department of Conservation—the predecessor to the Department of Natural Resources—or parts of Commerce and Community Affairs, DCCA, and other state

agencies. Because they dealt with infrastructure investments, and it was a pretty broad definition, their programs were then put under the Build Illinois umbrella; so when grants were announced—job training grants or conservation grants—those became Build Illinois announcements.

So that part was done in conjunction with the bonds that were being sold to fund future investment. It really went to the heart of Illinois investing in itself. Some people claim that it was part packaging, I guess the fact you sold over a billion dollars' worth of bonds.¹⁴ No, I would say. Then the other issue with Build Illinois: eventually the legislature wanted their part of Build Illinois, and they became—

DePue: That almost sounds like pork.

Reineke: Yeah. They became, as I was told repeatedly by legislative leaders, described as “legislative add-ons.” An add-on was, each caucus would get a chunk of money—each of the four caucuses, the two Democratic and two Republican, House and Senate—and they could put in different projects for their members, which at least in theory had to have some connection to developing and supporting the infrastructure of the state. That was always interesting because you'd get these legislative lists; we'd have to look at them at the end of session as the bill was being voted on, and you'd have to say this fits or this doesn't fit. I mean, there were some interesting projects that came up over the years. There was one for—I forget the legislator who submitted it, or which caucus it came from—it was for chainsaws to cut down trees to make room for a playground or a parking lot or something else. That's the kind of stuff that would get filtered out and get rejected. But to your point about some would call it pork, yeah, some would call it pork. But as I said, technically they were “legislative add-ons.”

DePue: Why wasn't this part of the regular revenue stream and part of the budgeting process? It sounds, as you're describing this, like something separate in terms of this bonding initiatives and spending a lot more money on infrastructure.

Reineke: They had to have authorization to sell the bonds separately. The other components that were part of this went through the regular legislative appropriations approval process. At the end of the day, it was all packaged under the Build Illinois program, but there were elements that were certainly part of... Let me put it like this: if there was no Build Illinois, would you still have had a number of projects, most of them moving forward in some capacity? You very well could have had that, yeah.

DePue: Why was this so important to the governor? What was it about that project?

Reineke: About Build Illinois? Because it showed reinvestment in the state of Illinois. The eighties were a difficult economic time for us. I think what this would

¹⁴ For example, see Jim Edgar, June 10, 2009, 51.

have allowed the administration to showcase was the ability to focus and put funds into the state, which were going to be used for long-term investment that would tie directly to economic development. So if you had an environment that maybe wasn't the best economically, it's a positive attribute. You've got to announce things. I just packaged it up, so it allowed you, in 1986 and beyond, to show the state reinvesting in itself.

DePue: Was this good politics on his part? Was that primarily the driver?

Reineke: I would say it was a good policy and good politics. It was both. See, that's the challenge. It's easy for critics to think you can separate. There are bright lines, and there are lines that shouldn't be crossed. I think we've seen that in the last number of years, in Illinois state government. But there's also an intersection of the two. And while you can't violate the letter of the law, to think that if you do good works in government it's not going to translate into a political advantage, I think that's naïve. I don't think you let your governmental decisions be driven by your political self-interest, but I don't think you can separate the two. I don't care which party you are or what philosophy you have; I think it's awfully, awfully, difficult.

DePue: I know that in terms of economic development—because other states were competing for new industries to come—Thompson was putting together packages as well. Now, was that part of Build Illinois, or was that a separate issue?

Reineke: It was tangential to Build Illinois in the sense that most of that was driven by the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, and Peter Fox, Mike Woelffer, Jay Hedges, and Steve McClure. That agency became the central: here's the offer we're going to put on the table. Remember the environment we're in, though. It's the 1980s, and all of the states were doing this to one another. When you speed up the history here and look at how the Edgar administration handled economic development, you have to understand that it wasn't necessarily a mistake for Illinois to do it, because everybody else was doing it.

The beauty of what happened with the Edgar administration, in terms of the economic development and incentives, was really to take a step back and look at inward investment versus, gee, let's all compete for the Diamond Star Mitsubishi plant, and let's all put tax breaks on the table. So it wasn't as though the Thompson administration and Illinois were out there doing this, because, guess what, we were competing against our neighbors in Ohio or down in Texas or wherever. It was more the overall environment that existed in the U.S. at that time. It was all competitive. It wasn't about growing your internal firms, internal companies, manufacturers; it was about getting that next plant located here. There'll always be an element of that, but fundamentally that's what the chase was about: who could offer them the most.

DePue: That's what always fascinates me about this discussion. We start by talking about Illinois politics, but it's always part of that larger fabric of American politics and policy.

Reineke: I agree. Illinois is so symbolic of the United States. It really is a microcosm.

DePue: I would guess that one of the things that Thompson really warmed up to in terms of a project was the Thompson Center here in town [Chicago].

Reineke: Yeah, he did. It's a unique building.

DePue: Can you describe (laughs) the building for us, for those who might not be familiar with it?

Reineke: Sure. Some people have called it a spaceship-like building; some people have used other detrimental terms to describe it. At one time it was very futuristic—a lot of glass, a lot of pastel panels, a very large open atrium with retail shops on the lower levels. Could we take a break right here, Mark?

DePue: Yes, we can.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, we took a very quick break so Gene could earn a living here, and we're back at it again. We were talking about the Thompson Center, and I was allowing you to describe it.

Reineke: Right. It was a very large glass structure, with pastel colors that appeared to be salmon and blue, although they have faded with the years. A large sculpture by the French artist Dubuffet out front. Both the building and the sculpture have been critiqued and criticized by a lot of people over the years. People didn't particularly like them, or found them to be interesting. The building was designed by Helmut Jahn, the architect, and Governor Thompson was intimately involved in that design process and selection process.

The fundamental thing I think a lot of people remember about the building: it was built under the auspices and guidance of the Illinois Capital Development Board, and it was to be run on a day-to-day basis by the Illinois Department of Central Management Services. It wound up having a lot of problems when it first opened up. There were problems, particularly with the ventilation system, with the heating and the air conditioning, and there were a number of renovations and repairs that had to be done, given all these state workers working in there, as well as the retail shops. There were just a lot of issues associated with it. But it really became a unique example of a building that I think a lot of people will take a look at in Chicago today and say, "That's kind of an unusual-looking facility." It didn't look like a typical government building; maybe that's the simplest way to put it.

DePue: Beside the name of the building, what is it about that place that is so connected with Jim Thompson?

Reineke: It was consolidation of state facilities down in the Loop into one facility, and the fact that it's got a modernistic design by a world-renowned architect, with a large, unusual—depending on one's taste—Dubuffet sculpture out front. It really became his signature; it became his building, his baby. It was built in his administration, and it had a certain largeness about it; a certain largeness to be compared with even the Thompson personality.

DePue: So a metaphor for his style of governorship?

Reineke: Could be, yeah—larger than life in a lot of ways. It's lasted. Style and taste change, but yeah, I think it could only be named the Thompson Center after one person. (laughter)

DePue: Any other projects that stay with you?

Reineke: No, nothing quite like that. I became head of Central Management Services a few years after that, and I had the responsibility for making sure the operations of the building operated efficiently. I remember we'd had some challenges with the elevators running and not running, and all that good stuff. I actually enjoyed the place and split my time between Springfield and Chicago.

DePue: We're not quite where we can talk about the CMS position. Where did you move after your year with Build Illinois?

Reineke: I became the director of personnel in the governor's office. The director of personnel was informally known—not officially known—as the patronage chief position.

DePue: We are in Illinois, and that term “patronage” has a very storied history in this state, so let's take a little bit of time and flesh that out.

Reineke: Okay.

DePue: What were the patronage rules when you were director of personnel?

Reineke: People would take state exams and be given different grades—A, B, C, whatever—on an exam. So the guiding principle was, could someone who was a supporter of your administration—be it an individual, regardless of party—actually be given a position as long as you had equal grades in terms of qualifications. The allegation with patronage has always been, how do you determine that? Isn't that subjective after a certain point? If you have two people who get A's or two people who get Bs, how do you decide that? But remember, this is all pre-Cynthia Rutan ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court;

this was allowed. I think this ruling might have been in July of '90. I'm not sure.

DePue: Yeah, that's about right, it was mid-'90.

Reineke: When patronage then became illegal in the United States. So you couldn't do it anymore; political views or political affiliation could not be acknowledged in a job hire.¹⁵

DePue: I don't want to get ahead of myself. We'll talk about *Rutan* in a little bit. What was Thompson's personal view towards patronage?

Reineke: I think he thought it was fine; it was something that helped government run more reflective of the office-holder's personal philosophy and style. I don't think that he saw anything wrong with it at all, as long as you started with: the person needs to be qualified for the job, and if you take into account their support for, in this case, Jim Thompson, or whomever politically, that's fine because they share the same philosophy of governing as you do. The critics will argue, well, maybe that's fine at a certain level—cabinet, sub-cabinet, et cetera—but as you go down into the sixty, seventy thousand people who are in state government, at a certain point, does that make any difference or not? I have to tell you, having dealt with enough bureaucracy in state government at different times over the years, it's easier to have people who are going to cooperate with you than be uncooperative.

Now, maybe because I was there and was a practitioner of those personnel policies, I have a view that I don't see any major harm with it. I do think in a perfect world, which we don't live in—particularly nowadays with a Supreme Court ruling that says you can't take it into account—then it should not be anymore. I also think you have to juxtapose official personnel policies against what I subjectively think you wouldn't describe as political patronage; you might describe it as personal patronage. What do I mean by that? I mean somebody who's at a state agency, who hires their neighbor's kid for a position—or they know their sister-in-law or something like that. So just illustrating, I hope not too defensively, to argue that it's really hard to ever get to the point—and this is back in the nineties—where you could say there is not a subjective element that goes into a hiring decision.

DePue: Describe the mechanics of it. You're the director of personnel, i.e., the patronage chief for the governor, and a position becomes open that's pretty far down the structure here, which normally a person would consider to be pretty obscure. How do you go about filling that position?

¹⁵ *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990). By a 5-4 vote, the decision extended the rule of *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976) and *Branti v. Finkel*, 445 U.S. 507 (1980), determining “that promotions, transfers, and recalls after layoffs based on political affiliation or support are an impermissible infringement on the First Amendment rights of public employees.”

Reineke: So here's the process. Remember the environment we're in. There are cuts in state government, so there's a hiring freeze because they're going to cut the total number of employees.

DePue: And this is 1987–88 timeframe that you're...

Reineke: That's the timeframe, correct. So there was a hiring freeze, which meant the Illinois Bureau of the Budget had to essentially approve—and it was sort of a mechanical process—for an agency to go and solicit candidates for whatever particular job they were soliciting candidates for. People then sign up for tests, and you have to basically get an A—you can't get a lower grade—to even be considered. So then you've got a group of people that are all qualified, because you're never going to get the people who are in a lower B or C level. That's because the volume is so heavy for people who make the top grade, the A grade, the qualified grade. So then what happened was people would come in and be scheduled for interviews. People would have legislative or political sponsors; people would be getting calls or letters, writing to say, I want you to consider Joe Smith or Sally Brown for this particular position.

DePue: But you're not the hiring official. People are being interviewed at the Department of Transportation if that's the location for the job, right?

Reineke: That's correct. People at those departments, though, had liaisons to our office of personnel, so at the end of the day you'd have the governor's office saying, Oh, we have a recommendation from Joe Smith or Sally Brown; would you please consider them in this process? Sometimes those people got hired; sometimes they didn't get hired. Sometimes when people who had a political recommendation, who were on the qualified list, didn't get hired, you'd have to deal with an angry state legislator or county official. So that happened. Sometimes they did get hired. Sometimes there were enough positions because—let's say it was a DOT type of job, a road maintainer. There may be twelve people they were looking to hire, so there were people that got recommendations that were hired and people that were recommended but didn't get hired. That's really what it came down to in the whole process—that you, as the personnel office for the governor, would try to get recommended people considered by agencies. But the agencies didn't just roll over and do what the governor's office wanted.

DePue: That's the public perception.

Reineke: Yeah. I think that it's probably because a lot of times they did hire who the governor's office wanted, but I'm just saying it was never, like, 100 percent versus zero. So it was always sort of a—*combination* is the wrong word. But you had to look at the jobs. You had to have certain qualifications. You couldn't have somebody who was not qualified to be a social worker out working for the Department of Children and Family Services. But if somebody's got the background that qualifies them to be a child-welfare

social worker, and they happen to get endorsed by legislator A, why should they not be considered in the mix? The real issue is where you said, at what point does that influence become a dominating variable that makes the decision go in favor of one person or another? But remember, that was acceptable and legal back then. Then everything changed in July of '90.

DePue: Would this apply to the secretary of state's office as well?

Reineke: Yeah. I never worked at the secretary of state's office, so I don't know how they did it then, but I would assume that the rule... You mean the ability for the secretary of state's—

DePue: In your position, though, you didn't have any control over positions in the secretary of state's office, because that's a separate constitutional officer.

Reineke: Correct, correct.

DePue: But the Department of Transportation would be a good analogy.

Reineke: Um-hm.

DePue: So let me see if I've got this right: there are positions in the Department of Transportation up in Kane County, for example. People have applied; there's a group of people who have gotten an A, who are then going to be going for interviews for those positions. Then you get a call from the chairman of the Republican Party from Kane County, who says, "You know, we want you to support this person and this person for those positions." You would then pick up the phone and call somebody in the Department of Transportation, and say, "Here's the people we would like to have you consider"?

Reineke: I would, or one of the people who worked for me—and say, "Can they be considered as part of the evaluation process?" Sometimes those folks would get the jobs, and sometimes those folks would do an interview and screw it up, and not be someone that the department wanted to hire. So that's always where you were put in a difficult position of having to explain to supporters, Joe or Sally is not going to get the job, versus, They are going to get the job. But that is fundamentally how it worked.

DePue: Did Thompson weigh in on this sometimes? Would Thompson be the one who picked up the phone and called those people?

Reineke: No, I can never imagine that. I don't recall that ever happening at all.

DePue: Again, the perception is that the heavy hand of the governor's office is down there and really putting pressure on these agencies to select these people.

Reineke: If you're sitting at an agency, because you are working at a department that is under the auspices of the governor's office, you work for the governor's

office; you work for the governor. And you have a separate responsibility as a state agency, as a cabinet director and the people that work for the agency. But do I think there's an absence of pressure, no, I don't; I wasn't naïve. I do think that because it comes from the governor's office, people do feel a certain obligation to do what they can if all other considerations are met, starting with qualifications and the person can do the job.

Because here's the problem: if you try to shove people into positions, put people in positions—however you want to describe it—that are not qualified, it's going to blow up on you at some point. When it blows up on you, all that's going to do is the next time you make a recommendation, you're not going to get your candidate considered; it'll be, remember what happened previous to that. So it was a delicate fine line you had to walk. There were all these human nuances that go into it. Suppose somebody goes in and hits it off with the interviewer. Suppose somebody stumbles.

It's like when I interview people here in the private sector. There's a chemistry level, they both look good on paper—what makes me decide? Now, if I have a client—I'm just using this as an analogy—who says to me, Oh, could you consider so-and-so for an internship, and the kid looks like they're going to be fine on paper and against another kid, am I going to think in the back of my mind, oh, one of my clients is recommending this person? Yes, I am. Am I also going to think of times where I thought I did a courtesy to hire someone's son or an interview for an internship here in the private sector, and the guy stumbled and just blew it so badly? I wouldn't tell our folks, "You need to hire him," in this case. So my point is, it's hard, when you have a systemic issue that has been going on for a long time, to say that everyone may have been as sensitive to all those other factors. But it was not a guarantee that just because someone had a recommendation from a politician or political person that they were going to get that job. It was never that clean or that absolute.

DePue: I have to imagine, though, being in this position is something like a pressure cooker, because you're getting it from all sides, I would think.

Reineke: Yeah, you are, because the reality is when folks didn't get their way, because their person wasn't selected by a department, you would hear about it. You would hear about it through the legislative office, or you'd hear about somebody else that had a relationship with someone in the governor's office, and you would have to explain why, and then you'd go back to the department. So it worked both ways.

DePue: Any particular anecdotes or incidents that stick with you?

Reineke: No, I probably blocked them out of my mind on purpose. (laughter)

DePue: Let me bring up this one, then.

Reineke: Okay, go ahead.

DePue: The lieutenant governor at that time, George Ryan, certainly had a reputation for being able to work the patronage system on his behalf and to help people do favors and those kinds of thing—keep track of that kind of stuff. Was he involved with it? Was his office one of the organizations that would call you quite frequently?

Reineke: I don't know about quite frequently, but Ryan called, Ryan's folks called—Bob Newton or whomever at the time. George actually did pick up the phone with people. I had a guy who worked for me in the governor's office, that George had recommended, so I met with him. It was a governor's office appointment, so it wasn't a big deal. But that was how George was. Unlike Jim Thompson, or definitely Jim Edgar, George would get involved in that kind of thing, pick up the phone. But it wasn't as if there was some great volume. There's a limitation to how much anybody can ask for.

DePue: Any particular incident where there was what you would consider undue pressure put on you?

Reineke: Oh, probably. I probably felt like that at different times. When I was in personnel, patronage, I never felt that we did anything that was so abusive and so wrong in terms of what we fundamentally believed: Is this person going to be qualified to do this job? So nothing really stands out in terms of a particular incident that I'm like, Oh my gosh, I wish that wouldn't have happened.

Not to try to go off on a different subject, but we would rarely get recommendations for someone to be considered, for example, for a child welfare specialist in DCFS? Rarely. A lot of it was more blue-collar type of positions. Every time that somebody in an agency like DCFS messed up, made a mistake, didn't do home visits and a kid died—that would make me upset, too. It's so hard to say that just because someone got in through a political recommendation versus someone got in through a non-political process, it makes a difference on how they perform their jobs. I'm not sure there's ever been enough empirical studies that looked at something like that, or if you could even do something along those lines. So I don't mean to sound like a defender of patronage, but I'm not offended by the concept of patronage when it was legal.

DePue: That, quite frankly, is why I'm pursuing the question. Because it has such a negative perception among the public—

Reineke: Right, it does.

DePue: —it's important to hear the other side of the argument, and that's why I've taken the opportunity to do that. Did you enjoy this year as the patronage chief?

Reineke: Yeah, I enjoyed all my positions. It could go to one's ego, in part because you had people always asking for favors, but I was also ready to do something, in my opinion, more substantive, which is why I wanted to go into Central Management Services. But I didn't dislike it.

DePue: You'd been moving quite a bit through the Thompson administration; I would assume all of these are essentially steps up, if not maybe to the same level.

Reineke: Yeah. They were new responsibilities. I think the final step up was when—even though Jim Thompson had announced he wasn't going to run again—I became a member of the cabinet. That, to me, was a substantial step up in terms of responsibility, because I essentially had eleven hundred, twelve hundred people answerable to me, with a wide variety of responsibilities within state government—from insurance to buildings to the actual personnel process to information technology to real estate. So I would say there was a progression of responsibilities in my different positions in the governor's office, but at the end of the day, until I became head of an agency or a department, it was a substantive difference. Even though people changed in terms of roles and responsibilities, I'm essentially dealing with the same group of people around Jim Thompson for many years. So whether I did scheduling, or whether I did Build Illinois, or whether I did personnel, patronage—it was a lot of the same folks.

DePue: Before you move beyond the director of personnel position, my guess is that the *Rutan* case began either before or during your time in that position, is that right?

Reineke: Right.

DePue: And if I can recall directly, the specific name of the lawsuit was *Cynthia Rutan v. The Republican Party of Illinois*—and writ large, “versus Jim Thompson.”

Reineke: Right.

DePue: Was that especially a contentious time period to be serving in this position, when you knew that lawsuit was working through the courts?

Reineke: I would be lying if I told you it was. You knew these legal issues were out there, but until you had resolution, I don't think there was any sense... I think people were surprised when the Supreme Court ruling came down, to be honest with you. I say that to describe what the environment was. I don't think that people thought that was going to be the Supreme Court decision. If you back up from that, there were probably lawsuits besides that one, over the years. I don't recall any, but there may have been.

DePue: You weren't looking over your shoulder in that respect?

Reineke: No, no.

DePue: How did *Rutan*, then, change the landscape for patronage?

Reineke: Now, when that happened, I'm at—

DePue: Right, this is beyond your time.

Reineke: —Central Management Services. To the best of my knowledge, it stopped it. It stopped because it was illegal. It is interesting that you ask that question, because I was head of Central Management Services, which meant I had to, at the end of the day, take responsibility for signing off on all personnel transactions by other agencies as well. You could get hired by another agency, but to go through the process with payroll and insurance and all that stuff. We did not acknowledge or accept any personnel referrals from the governor's office. I know that people were very critical of me at that time, because I said to our folks, and we made it very clear, it's now illegal, with the Supreme Court ruling. Now, do I think maybe it took some people longer to understand that? Yeah, I think it did, but I also don't think it made me a lot of friends.

I'm not trying to sound holier-than-thou, but when I was at CMS, I was in a position where I was not afraid—maybe this was naïve on my part—to try to do the right thing, and I can give you several different examples. But that was really crystal clear for me; that the U.S. Supreme Court said it's illegal to do political hiring. CMS has the ability to stop anything, so even if a personnel recommendation to an agency came through and we were made aware of something or someone told us, we just didn't process it or didn't do it. Not to get off patronage here, but that even goes to the reason I cancelled the building deal with PacifiCorp when it became part of the Hartigan and Edgar campaign. The same reason I didn't allow a certain computer system to be approved, because it didn't go through the proper process. I only say all that to you to say that I had an evolutionary frame of mind. I think you can say, Well, what caused the change of heart after coming out of the political environment or the governor's office? I think when I was at the state agency, you got to really see things in a much more black-and-white sort of way, what's right and what's wrong.

DePue: I know that the *Rutan* decision did exempt some positions, but it was a tiny minority of the positions that used to be open for that process.

Reineke: Right, everything else was essentially open to that process.

DePue: Let's talk about your move to CMS, and maybe the timing of it and how you were selected to that position, and then lay out exactly what that means, to the outsiders of us among here.

Reineke: Michael Tristano had been the director of Central Management Services, and I believe he went off to the University of Illinois in some capacity at the U of I

Chicago. The position was open, and I let the governor know that I was interested in being considered for it. I had been working for the governor long enough that at a certain point, if the governor has confidence in you and you've demonstrated through a series of positions and responsibilities that you're sensitized and savvy enough to understand all the nuances that go into managing an agency like Central Management Services, he thought I would be qualified for it.

DePue: I assume that you had to be approved by the legislature?

Reineke: I did have to be confirmed, yes.

DePue: Was this the first position you held where that was the case?

Reineke: Yeah, I had to be approved by the Senate Executive Appointments Committee.

DePue: Any problems in that process?

Reineke: No, there really weren't any. I didn't have any. My own legislative issue was, (laughs) as I said earlier, Build Illinois—that first hearing—but there were subsequent hearings I did fine at. But for CMS, it wasn't. By this time, I was more of a senior person in the Thompson administration, so I had been working for eight years. I knew people in the legislative arena. I knew people in our legislative office. I knew a lot of senators. Remember I also was head of Boards and Commissions. When you're head of Boards and Commissions, you have to manage the process to get all those thousand-plus people through, in most cases, Senate confirmation. That is part of your responsibility. So I guess what I'm trying to say is, it's not as if I was an unknown entity in this position, like, who is this fellow that's never been in government before? I had been around before, and most of the legislators knew who I was.

DePue: I think it says something that you served as the director of personnel and hadn't made that many enemies in the process.

Reineke: Well, that's true, that's true. That may have been an advantage.

DePue: (laughs) So what exactly is Central Management Services?

Reineke: I would say it is possibly the single most influential state agency. Not in terms of the subject area it oversees—because obviously Children and Family Services, child welfare, is the most important, and other key agencies, from EPA to Transportation, are central to the people's lives—but I would say from an internal perspective of how state government runs. It's in charge of all of the insurance programs; it's in charge of all the computer systems and the state's fleet of cars; it's in charge of all the buildings and leases. So you have a wide expanse of responsibilities, and you get to learn about a lot of different things.

But there are a lot of sensitivities involved with it too, because if a place could blow up and cause a political problem, a government problem, legal problem it could happen anywhere, but I think you probably have more opportunities for things that cause headaches for an administration if you don't have the right person running Central Management Services, because you sign off on all these contracts. A lot of the other state agencies, in my opinion—and I heard this when I wasn't at CMS—resented the influence of Central Management Services; that it had too much power; it was too consolidated. In other words, state agency X could not do this unless Central Management Services signed off on it. They couldn't buy a computer system or they couldn't buy new cars, or whatever the issue was, unless it got approval. So it's sort of the internal operating officer for the day-to-day operations of state government.

DePue: What was it about the job that you liked, then?

Reineke: The diversity of the job. I knew about personnel, but I didn't know much about insurance, health insurance. We had to negotiate. I remember having to deal with AFSCME, and Steve Culen and Henry Bayer—Henry's still around state government.¹⁶ You dealt with all the labor agreements. For me, it was an intellectual challenge because I got to move much more into day-to-day operational policy than deal with the legislative world, political world, governor's office. I got to report to the chief of staff at that time, who was John Washburn, and to the governor directly, although I have to say that I had a lot of autonomy in the role. It wasn't as if I had to report in. It was not as centralized—no pun intended—in terms of the relationship with the governor's office as under the Edgar administration, where the executive assistants really had the directors, cabinet members, reporting to them. This was much more hands-off.

The other fact you have to weigh into all of it is you have the end of the Thompson administration. You have John Washburn. John came back from insurance, I believe. Jim Thompson's not going to run again. So you really had an opportunity to be a manager, and that's what I enjoyed—a lot of interesting challenges, a lot of new things to learn.

DePue: What were your career aspirations at this time? Because you just said Thompson had decided he's not going to run for reelection.

Reineke: Right. I was hoping to continue to work in government in some capacity. Actually, I wanted to work for Jim Edgar, although I knew Jim Edgar and George Ryan. I knew everybody on the ticket fairly well, and that an opportunity would be there. I even thought I could maybe stay at CMS as director, because I'd only been there for a year and a half, two years, until Jim Edgar said—between election day of '90 and inaugural day, he made an

¹⁶ American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

announcement—that the entire cabinet was going to be replaced.¹⁷ Some people might move to new roles. I thought maybe there was a shot for me, but no one would stay in their current roles, meaning, I'm going to have to leave CMS here at some point. Were my hopes that I could maybe survive at CMS? Yeah, they were. And then that was not to be, obviously.

DePue: Was anybody talking to you about the possibility of running for office? Like you said already, you had connections throughout the legislature; you had connections throughout the administration. Perfect launching ground if you do want to start your own political career.

Reineke: Yeah, but I think at this time it was the beginning of the realization in my own mind, after watching what campaigns entail and what Jim Thompson—and confirmed later with Jim Edgar—had to give up on a personal basis... I had not eliminated it totally, but that's really not the direction I wanted to go in. Now, there were moments, when I was still at CMS, I thought maybe that would be something, but at the end of the day I still had to figure out how to pay the bills and pay for a family. So while I didn't eliminate the idea that if the right opportunity was there, post-1990 was not the opportune time to figure out how to do that. But I think by that time I was pretty much in the camp of, boy, this is a lot of Sunday nights you have to give up, and it's a lot of personal pain; it's a lot, it's a lot.

DePue: Where was Janice on that process?

Reineke: She was always very flexible about it. Let me tell you just briefly. We weren't sure we were going to have kids; we thought we couldn't have kids. We went the adoption route, for special ed children, through the Department of Children and Family Services. With adoption number three, Janice got pregnant with our son, so we had three adopted daughters and a birth son at this time. For her, a large part of her day-to-day responsibility was managing the family household, because we had three kids that had additional challenges that some households have to deal with and some don't. That wasn't always easy. We had a number of issues over the years, and knock on wood, everything's worked out fine, as they're young adults now. But in terms of her with a political career, if I wanted to do it, she would have been supportive. It was about how do I pay for things? I mean, I had to have a job.

DePue: You'd been around campaigns close enough to realize there were financial challenges to it as well, then.

Reineke: Yeah. I think if you look at the U.S. Senate and members of Congress and how many millionaires are there right now, that is a great luxury to have. And that's part of the problem, and a different discussion, with our political process. Why we keep seeing so many people getting in trouble in Illinois,

¹⁷ Jim Edgar, November 17, 2009, 9-10 and 20.

although it can be applied to other places, is because of how campaigns are financed in the state, where the system has traditionally been so wide open. I think it's becoming more difficult for people who don't have the financial resources to run for office; you become dependent on people backing you and funding you. When that happens, it's very hard. And I know it's the reality and the legality of life, but it's hard to diminish and purely separate the influence of people who back a candidate from the decision-making process.

People have abused it, obviously, but I think that's what has gotten so many Illinois politicians in trouble: they didn't see where the line was, and they crossed the line. I'm not making excuses for them because they're in jail or could be in jail, but it's the fundamental core of all this. I know Jim Edgar disagrees with me on this because he's much more of an advocate for disclosure, but I've reached the conclusion that in some form or some capacity, we need to figure out in this country how we go more towards public financing of campaigns. I know there are constitutional issues with that, and I know there are political issues with that. You see why we take these little incremental bites at reform here, because fundamentally, when you take the larger bites, you're changing the political structure. It's really abhorrent to those that are in power to say, we're going to allow control of the process—because we're going to make these changes—to slip away from them. Enough on my soapbox.

DePue: No, that's great. You ran a political campaign in 1986?

Reineke: Yeah, I did. In 1986, Jim Thompson and someone who used to work in the U.S. attorney's office with him—Dan Weil, who's now deceased—asked me if I would take a leave of absence from the governor's office and, here in Chicago, run George Ranney's campaign for the U.S. Senate. Even though Jim Thompson did not officially endorse him, the symbolism of sending me from the governor's office to the campaign for George Ranney, to run a primary campaign against Judy Koehler, who was a state rep from downstate Illinois—I want to say suburban Peoria—very conservative, and had been running for a year and a half. I did that for three months in basically January, February, March of 1986. Judy had an operation that was set up and had been running for a long time.

George was much more of a moderate Republican. He had been with Mayer Brown, Inland Steel, Ryerson Steel. I did that from Chicago; my family stayed in Springfield. George Ranney was a great guy—it was a very challenging experience for all of us. We had one of George Bush's political consultants. Not Lee Atwater, but Rich Bond, who later became chairman of the RNC, came in as our consultant. We had a lot of people from the Thompson wing of the party that were supportive of us, but at the end of the day, I think we lost 55–45. We didn't have enough time. Petitions were being passed between Christmas and New Year's at the time. So I did that. That was an interesting experience.

DePue: We've spent an awful lot of time talking about the Thompson administration, which is exactly what I had hoped and intended. You had some fascinating observations here. Anything else you'd like to mention about these years where you came of age, so to speak, in the political arena?

Reineke: I guess I'd just say that my desire to stay active in the governmental/political process, by the time I was finished with my ten years with the Thompson administration, had not diminished. I was looking forward to the opportunity to work with Jim Edgar, who I mentioned I got to know a little bit. As I was working in the Thompson administration, Edgar would invite me over to have fried chicken; this is back before his heart issues. We'd have lunches on a somewhat irregular basis, every so often. I got to know him and he got to know me. I think that sort of set the foundation; that it didn't have to be this politically immature, competitive nature that some of the Thompson and Edgar staffs had towards one another.

It wasn't as if it was a big, happy Republican tent. You had the principal officeholders up here, but you also had staffs that were loyal to Jim Thompson; staffs that were loyal secretary of state Jim Edgar; to a lesser degree, George Ryan, because his was a smaller office. So you had different camps and different alliances. One of the things that I always respected about Jim Edgar—it may sound silly to observers—was the fact that he was able to not view me as a Thompson staff person only. Not that there were any issues at the top, but the staffs were very competitive with one another. Because, if you remember, back in 1986, we weren't sure Thompson was going to run for a fourth term. I remember a bunch of us were over at the mansion that night—it was a Sunday night—and Jim Thompson called Jim Edgar on the phone and said he was going to run again. Then there was buzz later in '90, but that wasn't ever really real. So when you have that sort of environment and you have people who are loyal to one principal politician or another, there's a certain amount of—it didn't matter if they had *Rs* behind their names; you were a Thompson, you were an Edgar or Ryan or whomever, Republican.

DePue: What would be your overall assessment of the Thompson years, of Jim Thompson as the governor?

Reineke: I think he was an excellent governor. This sounds really corny, and I know people have used it before, but he did fit the times in the 1980s; whether it was his midnight saving of the Chicago White Sox and the new stadium; whether it was Build Illinois, which we talked about; or whether it was his larger-than-life personality. Following off—I call it the disappointment—of the Walker years, and the internal Democratic fighting and things like that, I think Thompson was able to move the state forward in a way that made sense at the time.

But at the end of the administration, whether one wants to acknowledge it or not, we probably spent too much. It's sort of like now. I

think we've all realized, from a national perspective, that you've got to have the money to pay for things. I think that while it was fine during most of the eighties, the fact that you were able then to transition to a Jim Edgar, who has a different philosophy—you better have the money in the bank and not on credit—it sounds hokey, but it kind of fit. It made a nice transition. But back to Thompson—I will always be grateful for the opportunities he gave me, and I will always think that he did a lot of good for the state of Illinois. I think he was a good governor.

DePue: You've been giving us two and a half hours' worth of fascinating insight, from the insider's perspective, of how politics in Illinois works and how governance in Illinois works. I think this is probably a great place to stop and pick up next time. We'll concentrate on Jim Edgar in the future session. So thanks very much, Gene. Any final comments as we close up?

Reineke: No. Looking forward to our next conversation.

DePue: Okay, great.

Reineke: Thanks, Mark.

(end of interview #1)

Interview with Gene Reineke

ISG-A-L-2009-038.02

Interview # 2: April 16, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is Friday, April 16, 2010. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Finally, after many, many months, I'm back with Gene Reineke. Good afternoon, Gene.

Reineke: Nice to see you again, Mark.

DePue: We are here at the Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago. It's about a block and a half away from the Hancock Building and Water Tower Place, so we're right in downtown Chicago. We had an outstanding session back in December, you said?

Reineke: It was indeed.

DePue: So we're four months beyond that timeframe. You've been out in Philadelphia but are back for a very short weekend here in Chicago, and then heading back to the East again, so I really appreciate your taking time out to talk to us. We got you to the point where we're beginning to talk about your experiences with Jim Edgar and the Edgar administration. Did you have any direct involvement in the Edgar gubernatorial campaign?

Reineke: No, I didn't have any direct involvement. I was in the Thompson administration, and I was a state employee as the director of the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, so that would have probably been inappropriate to have—

DePue: A conflict of interest.

Reineke: Yeah, I don't think that would have been a very wise thing to do at the time.

DePue: Let's start with this, then: when did you first meet Edgar?

Reineke: I met then-Secretary Edgar in 1982 out on the campaign trail. He had been appointed secretary of state by Governor Thompson in January of 1981 to fill the position of the former secretary of state, Alan Dixon, who had gotten elected to the United States Senate. At that time, Jim Edgar was appointed secretary of state. He was campaigning for his first statewide position, and I was on the campaign staff of Governor Thompson, who was running for reelection in 1982 to his third term.

DePue: Your first impressions of the man.

Reineke: Interesting. My first impression of Secretary Edgar at the time, in all frankness, was that he was an attractive candidate, but I thought there was room for improvement as a speaker on the campaign trail. One thing that was very noticeable was he was the rising star of the Republican Party at the time: new face, a wonderful reputation. I think that he was viewed as really the next generation of Republican leadership in the state. You have to remember, at that time the economy started to go sour. Governor Thompson was running for his third term, and in politics, the longer someone's around—and there are exceptions—there is a greater tendency for people to perhaps tire of an elected officeholder and look for somebody new. So Edgar really was able to kind of capture that freshness, newness, and spark. But to your question—he did have some room to grow in terms of his speaking style on the campaign trail.

DePue: You were involved with the Thompson administration from that period forward, and so was Edgar as the secretary of state. I'm sure he was very aware of you, and I'm sure you followed his career, but did you have a lot of direct dealings with him?

Reineke: I really had my first significant, direct dealings with Governor Edgar in 1984. Got to meet him, obviously, on a number of occasions, but then he invited me to have somewhat irregular, in terms of the scheduling, lunches every so often with him. So that's 1984. It's a couple years after that campaign and then got to know him as I worked for the Thompson administration in the succeeding years.

DePue: Was that a courtesy on his part, or do you think he was scoping you out in terms of his future aspirations?

Reineke: That's funny—you never really know what motivates someone in terms of why they do particular things. I would argue it's more of the latter. From a courtesy perspective, I don't think there's any great advantage to doing that. I mean, I was a younger staff person at the time. I think the reality was he may have found some qualities in me, which he saw or heard from others, that he thought might be advantageous. I liked him and I admired him. We had conversations at different points in time, even as I was in the Thompson administration. He did tell me one time that he had thought and had conversations about perhaps making me an offer to join his administration in the secretary of state's office, but it never came to that. Honestly, I had a very good career in the Thompson administration, in the various positions I had. So it was really about the beginnings of a professional friendship back in the early to mid-eighties when it got to be more regular.

DePue: You finished off, as you already mentioned here, as director of CMS, which is one of those positions that has an awful lot of clout in the state. But usually—hopefully, maybe, from your perspective—you're a little bit below the radar, as far as most of the press and things that are going on are concerned.

Reineke: Sure. In a lot of ways, CMS is interesting because it's such a significant presence around the state and in Chicago. They—I assume they still do—administer and run the Thompson Center, the big state building here. They obviously deal with the administrative mechanics of state agencies and how they operate, from insurance to information technology to real estate, et cetera. But when all is said and done, I would suggest that it's really, I don't want to say inside baseball, but it's inside state government in terms of what they're responsible for. So in a lot of ways, you could look at Central Management Services, CMS, as the grease of the state government machine in terms of operations and what makes things happen.

I'll use procurement, for example, or look at personnel benefits, all of those mechanics that involve state government—a large portion of them are

run through a process that CMS either owns or is involved in to some degree, unlike other state agencies, whether it's natural resources or transportation, that have a lot more public interaction with constituencies. The constituencies with Central Management Services, I would say, are primarily focused on external businesses that want to do business with the state, as well as your internal constituencies—the state agencies, your customers; and state employees, labor unions that cover state employees, and things like that.

DePue: How many people worked at CMS during the time you were there?

Reineke: I think I recall this number—approximately twelve hundred employees, with the overwhelming majority being in Springfield.

DePue: Here's the other thing that strikes me about this, Gene. How old were you when you took over CMS?

Reineke: Oh, it's a good question. Let me see how quickly I can do this in my head. I took over CMS at some point in 1989. I succeeded Mike Tristano.

DePue: So you would have been about thirty-three?

Reineke: Yeah. I was born in '56, so I was thirty-three years old, that's right.

DePue: Pretty young for a position like that, I would think.

Reineke: Yeah, but we just mentioned that Barack Obama has a speechwriter that's still in his twenties.

DePue: (laughs) There you go. At what point in time did Edgar come and approach you about a real position in his [gubernatorial] administration? Was it during the campaign, was it after the election, was it after the inauguration?

Reineke: It was before the inauguration, and it was after the election. He was obviously beginning to form and assemble the transition team first and then go through the interview process for candidates who would be director-level appointments, cabinet-level appointments in the administration. So I had conversations with a number of people during what we'll call the transitory period between election day and inaugural day. I had the first serious conversation with him—I would say it was early January of 1991.

DePue: And what specifically did the two of you discuss?

Reineke: He discussed my interests, but he already knew what he wanted me to do. (laughs) I don't want to say it was *fait accompli*, but it was (laughs) close to it.

DePue: I have down here that there was some talk about being the director of Department of Transportation.

- Reineke: Yeah, there was. I had an interest at the time to be considered for secretary of transportation, because I had run CMS and I thought that that was the next logical area of interest in terms of the infrastructure for the state. It was a larger department, and it was more external-facing than internal-facing. But that was not to be, and the governor selected Kirk Brown, who was excellent and is somebody that I have grown to like and admire and work with very closely over the years.
- DePue: But did he talk to you about that position?
- Reineke: He did not offer the position. The conversation, the best I can recall, may have been one of, "I know you have some interest in it, but..." and then we went in a different direction. I think that's probably how it goes.
- DePue: What position did he offer you, then?
- Reineke: It was really a combination of two things. First, he wanted me to take over as the executive director of the Illinois Republican Party, which was called the Illinois State Central Committee at that time. I would be his person, who would run the party, even though the party had a chairman who was elected among the committee members that make up the central committee. That job was coupled with the executive director of his campaign fund, Citizens for Edgar. So I had a dual responsibility in both of those non-government, non-public sector positions.
- DePue: The first position especially, I would think, is pretty much behind the scenes, but you're connecting with all of the prominent Republicans and a lot of the fundraisers around the state. And that's the natural connection for Citizens for Edgar, because you had to fill a void in his campaign funding, I would guess.
- Reineke: Right.
- DePue: Last time, though, when we finished off, you said you had given up on any ambitions of ever running for office yourself.
- Reineke: Oh, yeah, that's true. I think after spending ten years in the Thompson administration and watching the demands on the state officeholders and candidates in particular—what they have to commit in terms of personal sacrifice and time and quality of life—I realized that was not something I was prepared to do. And the other issue is... It's funny, everyone in life makes choices and has different priorities, but I really was a creature of the executive branch more than the legislative branch. When you get to that stage, you probably set your ambitions at a higher level, but you also understand what it takes to pursue a path like that. I've watched a lot of friends and former colleagues in government over the years explore statewide possibilities in running for an office, and more often than not, those ambitions don't pan out.

I guess the other element of my decision-making, in terms of my own future, was the fact that when you get to work very closely with a governor—in this case, Jim Thompson—for all those years, you really get a taste of that office and those responsibilities. I think it probably addresses some of those desires and ambitions, and perhaps personal needs, one tries to fulfill. In other words, you see it so close that—I don't want to say avoid, that's the wrong word—but that wish to get into a particular position is satisfied because you're right there, you're in the middle of the mix. You have enough of those kinds of experiences that while it's never quite the same as he or she who sits in that executive chair, be it a governor or a mayor—obviously the highest office in the land, a president—you have, I would say, a 95 percent sense of what it means to be in that kind of a position; not just the good that you can do, but the difficulty of the decisions, and the reality that you have to give up something to take a public position or pursue a public position like that.

DePue: But from what you've already talked to us about, you certainly didn't lack for ambition—being the secretary of Department of Transportation—and the jobs you're going to end up having in the Edgar administration aren't low-pressure jobs that don't demand much on your time; they're very high-pressure jobs that demand a lot of time.

Reineke: They do. That's not to say that just because I chose not to run for office and everything that goes with it, I did not have that desire to be successful in a public policy, public sector position. The frank fact of the matter is from a career perspective, those were logical moves for me to make, or ambitions or career paths to follow, from where I was leaving the Thompson administration and what I might do in the Edgar administration.

DePue: Let's move the focus back on Jim Edgar. I want you to use some adjectives of your impressions of Jim Edgar at the time he offered you this position.

Reineke: I guess maybe I could approach it like this: how about I come at it from the perspective of how I was feeling?

DePue: Very good.

Reineke: I was not, in all honesty, particularly enthralled with the idea of going to work for the Illinois Republican Party. The idea of having a position with his campaign organization or his fundraising committee was much more appealing to me because it was a perceptually closer tie to the governor, which obviously led to the conversation that he and I had. With no disrespect, when you have an elected governor, regardless of Democrat or Republican, in office, the party apparatus becomes less central to decisions that are being made on a political basis. The reality is the political decisions, in addition to all of the public policy decisions, are made by that individual in the governor's office. They become the titular head of the party, just like Barack Obama is the titular head of the national Democratic Party, head of the DNC.

So that's why I really didn't see a particular appeal. And it depends on who the chairman is, but parties have a tendency to be—I don't want to say ignored, that's not right—but really kind of play a secondary role in how things get done when, as I said, you have that chief executive of your own party in office.

DePue: Who was the chairman at the time?

Reineke: I remember the chairman that I went to work for, because he was my “other boss,” Al Jourdan. Al was the McHenry County Republican chairman, he was state central committeeman, and he was obviously the chairman of the Illinois Republican Party.

DePue: Now, you had been the personnel director, *i.e.*, the patronage chief, for a little bit of time for the Thompson administration. Was there a little bit of that job involved with this position as well?

Reineke: No, there is no patronage associated with the Illinois Republican Party. We're going to go back to the mid to late nineties. This is all pre-U.S. Supreme Court decision with *Rutan*. That's number one. What the nexus was, though, is that when you are in the position of being head of personnel or, as you described it, patronage chief, you do know who everyone is in terms of a couple of circles—not only the executive branch, but legislators as well as Republican Party officials around the state. There is a lot of that interaction because all those folks—as I think I mentioned in the first interview—all those people make recommendations.

So the fact of the matter is, I had worked in a gubernatorial administration for ten years in a number of roles, whether it was, as we said, the personnel patronage position, or a Build Illinois infrastructure position, or scheduling the governor, or taking recommendations for board and commission appointments. You put all that together; in a lot of ways, it was a natural fit for me to move over to run the day-to-day operations of the Illinois Republican Party. I think Governor Edgar actually used the quote, he wanted to move me “into a role that would be similar to what Lee Atwater had done for President Bush in Washington.” I don't know how legitimate that comparison was. To be honest with you, I viewed Carter Hendren in that role as a chief political operative for Jim Edgar. Carter had been during the secretary of state years; they had gone back a long time, from where they were from in the state, as well as the legislative branch.¹⁸

¹⁸ Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

- DePue: But I know that once the campaign was over—and Carter had done such a great job of running that campaign for Edgar—as I recall, he went back to work for Pate Philip pretty quickly.
- Reineke: Um-hm, he did. He did.
- DePue: Tell me a little bit more about Citizens for Edgar. What exactly did that job entail?
- Reineke: Really, there are two parts to it. Well, I guess you could say there are three parts. Fundamentally and primarily, I would say the job of that organization—whether it's Citizens for Edgar or any political campaign fund—is to raise money for the candidate, with the expectation that that candidate is going to run for reelection. Second, it's to make sure that organization helps provide a resource and a network, a communications channel, for the political operations, because it's outside of state government. Third, more specifically, I would suggest that at that time, there was a campaign debt to retire; more money had been spent than had been raised by the end of the campaign, and the good news was that it was able to be retired.
- DePue: How much was that?
- Reineke: I knew you were going to ask me that. I don't want to misspeak, and the number I used last time, I thought... You know, I can't recall off the top... It's whatever number I used last time; I just can't remember.
- DePue: What I have written down here based on our first conversation was four hundred to five hundred thousand dollars.
- Reineke: Yeah, it's interesting, because I was just going to say five hundred to six hundred thousand; but that half-million-dollar range, that's pretty much accurate.
- DePue: It makes sense that in this other position you have, you're talking to all the county chairmen, you're talking to all the more powerful and influential people in the Republican Party, who have the connections and know where to get the money. When you're talking, though, are you framing this in the sense that we need to help the governor retire his debt, or are you framing this in the sense that we need to help build his fund to run for reelection?
- Reineke: You don't lead with the discussion that we need to retire the debt. The only time you would lead with that discussion is if you had someone that was no longer running for office, and that's how you have to make your fundraising appeal and solicitation. The fact that we had to pay off some bills from the 1990 campaign was not really a public matter, in the sense that that's not how you articulate it; you have to go out and raise funds because people are investing in the policy and the personality and the leadership of Jim Edgar, and maybe have to pay off some bills before you are able to build that

account. It's sort of like any of us with a credit card bill, where we owe money. So you don't lead with that.

I thought you were going to go in a different direction: how do you reconcile raising funds, helping to raise funds, because I worked hand-in-hand with Lori Montana. How do you raise funds for a candidate at the same time you're charged with, in reality, helping to coordinate the raising of funds? I believe Pat Hurley had the contractual responsibility for the Illinois Republican Party at the time. You have to do both, but I think any of the day-to-day staff, or particularly the chairpersons of the state parties, would tell you it's much more difficult to raise funds for an entity rather than an individual.

DePue: I know Governor Edgar didn't like to do the fundraising in the first place; he didn't do much of any of that during the campaign itself. Anyway, he's pretty busy during that first year. When you're involved with this, he's busy trying to fill a huge hole at the time, a billion-dollar state deficit that he was trying to overcome. So was it a challenge to try to raise money for a governor who's slashing everybody's budget and probably upsetting lots of apple carts in the process?

Reineke: No, because you have to go back to the perspective that Jim Edgar won a relatively close contest in 1990. He was the future of the Republican Party. Recent history made folks that were involved aware of the day-to-day reality—fiscal and legislative and governance reality—of Springfield; I think there was enough enthusiasm surrounding this new, young, ambitious, bright, thoughtful governor, particularly when he showed the ability to make tough decisions. That's what drives people, not so much that, gee, we're going to have to make some serious financial decisions as it affects state government. The fact of the matter is that he was able to come at it with: We're not going to increase taxes, but we're really going to reshape and cut and make hard decisions in terms of state government to get the Illinois fiscal house back in order. That actually makes it easier in a lot of ways, because a fundamental belief of the Republican Party, at least the Republican Party that I grew up in, was one of fiscal responsibility. Unfortunately—allow my quick editorial comment—I think they've lost that vision on a national basis. But that's another discussion.

DePue: Now we're in the midst of a national debate in terms of what the direction of the Republican Party is in the future.

Reineke: Right.

DePue: Interesting that you just listed some adjectives of how the public, I guess at the time, saw Jim Edgar. Was this an easy sell to a certain extent then, in going to collect money for him?

Reineke: In helping raise money for him? Yeah, I think it was a relatively easy sell. As an elected office-holder, a public official, you have to separate what you do in your public role from raising funds. But the perceptual reality is, how you behave in that public role will determine your political success. It's what you lead with. I think it was attributed to Mayor Richard J. Daley—and I may have my quote attribution incorrect, but I think that was the case—that if you do the right thing in government, the politics will take care of itself, or words to that effect. And that's what we saw happen with Governor Edgar. I never believed it was a particularly difficult challenge. It's always a lot of hard work.

To your earlier comment or question about the governor may not have liked raising funds, I have to be honest with you. Anything I've read or any person I've ever worked with—there are perhaps exceptions—most elected officeholders, or an awful lot of them, don't like that part of the business. That's a big problem, which gets to another larger national question in terms of public financing of campaigns. We won't go there, but most of them don't like having to do that. That's part of the problem, as you listen to members of the United States Senate these days or, even more particularly, members of the United States House of Representatives, who are up every two years: they've got to spend so much of their time—carve it out for raising funds for the next cycle.

DePue: One of the reasons I said that, and you can correct me if you remember things differently, but as I recall, Carter Hendren said that Edgar never made a phone call, or maybe just one or two fundraising-related phone calls during that campaign, which think would be quite unusual for a campaign.¹⁹

Reineke: Since I didn't work on the campaign, I can't attest to whether...

DePue: I didn't mean to put you on the spot. Let's move you to the next position, then. Nineteen ninety-two I believe is when you got a different position.

Reineke: (laughs) That's when the governor had been asked by President George H. W. Bush to run his reelection campaign in Illinois as the chairman of the campaign. In turn, the governor asked me to take a leave from my two positions at that time and become the executive director of Illinois Bush-Quayle '92.

DePue: Was that a reluctant move?

Reineke: It was a reluctant move, but when your boss tells you that this is what he wants you to do, you do it, and you obviously dedicate yourself to doing the best job you can. I think if I use the word "reluctant," I'm not sure how

¹⁹ Hendren, April 28, 2009, 37-38. For the one phone call Edgar did make during the campaign, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 2, 2009, 47-48.

reluctant I was initially. I think I was perhaps somewhat intrigued. I think the reluctance (laughs) grew as the position evolved with time over the campaign.

DePue: At what point in the campaign did you get that position? Was it still in the midst of the primary?

Reineke: It was before the primary. I'd have to go back and search my memory, or I guess look at the scheduling records or other kinds of information that would be available, but I think I started around January of '92, because the primary was in March and—

DePue: Late March, though.

Reineke: Yeah, but Pat Buchanan was challenging George Bush on a presidential level, so we would have needed some time to get things set up. So I think that's probably the end of '91, the very beginning of '92, if I'm not mistaken.

DePue: Did you have an opportunity to meet either Bush or Buchanan in that primary campaign?

Reineke: Never met Pat Buchanan at all. I think I did meet President Bush several times after he won the Illinois primary and obviously was going to be the nominee of the party. There was not a lot of focus on Illinois early on, if I recall correctly; some things maybe happened up in New Hampshire. The Buchanan campaign was more one of insurgency. I don't want to say it was not a serious campaign or challenge, because it was, but I don't think it became a really competitive contest, particularly by the time they got to the Illinois primary.

DePue: So from your perspective, you weren't concerned and focused on Pat Buchanan?

Reineke: Well, you never take anything for granted, but we had to worry about two things. You worry about what's called the beauty contest, who's going to win the statewide election results, whatever it turns out to be—70-30 or whatever the numbers were. You also worry about the individual delegates that are nominated, who are pledged to the individual candidate—be it Bush or Buchanan—because they run in the congressional districts; a slate of three, four, or five people. At the end of the day, you could have someone actually win 51 percent of the votes, the beauty contest statewide. The flip side of it is you could have that individual, because they don't do it proportionally, win every single delegate in the state. Or the inverse: the loser of the statewide beauty contest could actually have more delegates than the person who won the statewide beauty contest, at least in theory.

DePue: Was the media paying more attention to the Democratic primary at the time?

Reineke: Yeah, I would say so, because it was an open contest. You had a number of Democratic governors. You had the beginning of the rise of Bill Clinton, and

frankly, all the sensational aspects associated with that campaign. I remember when President Clinton was still a candidate. The whole draft-dodger issue came up, and obviously it was successfully put down by the Clinton campaign. You had the personal liaisons, to put it politely, that were an issue, which came out of Arkansas. You had “I tried pot and I didn’t inhale,” the infamous... (laughs) So I think any time you have something like that—you have an incumbent that’s running for reelection even though he’s challenged by a right-wing conservative versus an open primary—that’s sort of where the glitz is. The real exception in terms of campaign cycles is what we just went through during the 2008 campaign, where fundamentally you had a field of candidates in both parties. I think that’s what people found so intriguing about this last campaign cycle.

DePue: Do you recall who on the Democratic side won the Illinois primary?

Reineke: I think it was Bill Clinton, but I’m not positive. I can’t recall absolutely now. I’m showing my age.

DePue: And I asked the question. I ought to know the answer, and I don’t. But we’ll get that fixed by the time you look at the transcript.²⁰

Reineke: Okay.

DePue: Let’s go to the national convention down in Houston, the Astrodome.

Reineke: Yes, and we stayed—

DePue: Any memories of that?

Reineke: Oh, yes, lots of memories of that. First of all, we stayed at the Doubletree Hotel, and because of the way Houston’s laid out—I’ve spent a lot of time in subsequent years down in Houston, and it’s a nice city—it was a little bit of a trek into the convention center; I guess it was the Astrodome, because the prior [convention] was at the Superdome in New Orleans. So down in Houston we’d have to trek the delegation back and forth. (laughs) One of my, I’ll call it a lighter note—I think that’s when we all had the orange blazers that Pate Philip had recommended for the delegation. I sometimes get my national conventions mixed up, but I think that was the case; we had orange blazers to represent, obviously, the Illini orange and blue. I remember the other thing: it was very stifling in terms of the heat and humidity in Houston. I did a number of interviews. I did one with Governor Edgar for *Crain’s Chicago Business*. We actually did it together. It was a good experience, and a lot of enthusiasm comes out of national conventions. So I would say in hindsight, that may have

²⁰ Bill Clinton won the Illinois primary in 1992, with 776,734 votes (56 percent). The runner up from the field of eight candidates was Paul Tsongas, who received 387,836 votes (28 percent). Paul M. Green, “Analyzing the Illinois Primary Vote,” *Illinois Issues* (June 1992), 13.

been the high-water mark for the campaign (laughs) on a national level at that point. But so be it.

DePue: Conventions like that are oftentimes used to take the measure of the party's future, if you will. Illinois is a large industrial state; it's a microcosm of the United States in terms of its geography and demographics. Was there any buzz at the time about what Jim Edgar's future might be at the national level?

Reineke: I think there was always talk of that sort of possibility. Where would he go next? Was there a position in administration for him possibly, something along those lines? Now, remember, you had the Bush-Quayle ticket, so could the governor, if the Bush administration had been reelected, gone to a cabinet position, perhaps? Yeah, there was some talk about it at the time. But a lot of that stuff, they were like parlor games. It's kind of fun to talk about that stuff and speculate, but I think, again, Jim Edgar still had that persona and perception as a young, rising star of a major industrial state. I can go back to the Thompson years, and there was talk about, gee, maybe Jim Thompson could be on the ticket. But obviously, when you look back on history, neither scenario—whether it was Jim Edgar or Jim Thompson—played out in terms of Washington, DC.

DePue: Let's get into the campaign season itself, then. Would you describe Illinois by that time, even though it had a Republican governor, as a pretty blue state? Was this a contested election as far as the presidential ticket was concerned?

Reineke: In Illinois?

DePue: Yeah.

Reineke: I don't think it ever really was, when I think back on it. I may have mentioned this before. Illinois, I think, demographically, from an electoral perspective, started to change with the 1988 presidential campaign. I don't think people realized it. Perhaps some academic analysis for those who follow it very closely would either support or perhaps deny that. I think what happened was, in 1988, you had a forty-state victory of George H. Bush over Michael Dukakis—I don't recall the exact numbers—but the Illinois numbers were very much indicative of a close campaign in the state. I think that surprised a lot of people. Bush wound up winning Illinois in '88, but I think that was the first sort of warning signal that went up to electoral observers that something was happening, that the electorate was changing in Illinois. By the time you get to 1992, with a popular governor in office, with a president, though, that may have been a bit of malaise about the campaign—I'm not suggesting that he didn't demonstrate that he wanted to be reelected, but I think there was talk and a lot of chatter about that, about the enthusiasm.

And in terms of Illinois specifically, I said perhaps the high-water mark was that Houston convention; because while you come back pumped up,

excited, when you started looking at polling data, as they did in the national campaign—which was not necessarily shared with us at the state level—it probably helped make it easy for the national campaign folks to decide that Illinois was not going to be competitive or as competitive as people had hoped. Now, you don't discuss that publicly. I still had to go on and say whatever I had to say to be supportive of the campaign, because that was my job, but I think that we got to the point—it was somewhere around Labor Day—where we found out that resources were going to essentially be redirected out of Illinois. The national campaign had decided that they were going to put them in states where they thought they could make a play. That's not unusual when you look at a national campaign and there are challenges that—remember, that was the campaign of the three candidates, with Ross Perot, as well as Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush.

DePue: Another interesting presidential year.

Reineke: Yeah, it was an interesting presidential year. I found it disappointing, though. If you had a look at the five (laughs) best states for Bill Clinton, I think that Illinois was one of those top two or three.

DePue: I'm going to put you on the spot again. Did Bill Clinton win the state outright, or if you could have combined the Perot and Bush votes, might Bush have pulled it out?

Reineke: I don't think Bill Clinton got a majority in Illinois that year. I'd have to go back and look. I think he had a significant margin, but I don't think he topped 50 percent.

DePue: At what point in this campaign did Governor Edgar come and talk to you about what was next on the agenda for you?

Reineke: We didn't really have that conversation till after the campaign. One thing I do want to mention—I may have mentioned it last time—was, after the primary season, I did have a conversation with the governor about my reluctance to continue through the rest of the campaign. One thing I think I've always prided myself on: I have a decent intuition, whether it's based on observational powers or experience—probably a little of both. I felt that this was going to be a really difficult challenge. I've always prided myself on working very hard, but at least with the goal of being successful. I do not personally like to put myself in the position of knowing that my likelihood of success would be diminished or in some cases, remote. But the governor quickly informed me—I think his quote was, “We all have to do things in life we don't want to do sometimes,” (laughs) which obviously put that discussion to bed pretty quick.

DePue: He could be persuasive in that respect.

Reineke: Oh, yeah. The one thing with Jim Edgar that I've always admired: he can be very strong and demonstrative in his views, but the man has always demonstrated to me the ability or the willingness to listen to different sides of an argument. He's very analytical, and if I had to take it one step further, he's very rational. Not to say that he does not understand and see the emotional side of the situation—he does; I personally saw that with the Baby Richard situation—but at the end of the day he's somebody who will always make a decision based on the facts and his own judgment and experience.

DePue: When did he offer a new position, and what was that position?

Reineke: It was after the election in November. We had a conversation. I had a health issue that I had to address at the time. I was still on the Bush–Quayle payroll, and then I was back on the Illinois Republican Party payroll for a while, so I would say it was probably sometime in November that we had the discussion as to what I would do. I have to say that it was never an issue of would I go into the Edgar administration—I would—it was just what would be the role and what would be the position that I would go into.

DePue: What position did you want at the time? You have to look around the landscape and figure out what might be available.

Reineke: Yeah. It's interesting, I've always had intellectual interest in a lot of policy-related matters and issues. I became the—I think the position title was executive assistant for economic development. That was something I had found intriguing: economic development and business development. I've always enjoyed it, so it was sort of a natural evolution.

DePue: I know the governor, when he started, had several assistant governors or deputy governors?

Reineke: Yeah, I think they may have been called that, although I think rather than being deputy governors, I think they were executive assistants. If I remember correctly, Jim Thompson had deputy governors, but I thought that Governor Edgar really redefined the model during his administration.²¹

DePue: I'll get the specific—maybe the deputy chief of staff. That might not be the appropriate term.

Reineke: Yeah, Kirk was the chief of staff. Then I think you're right: Sally, Mike Belletire—those folks were deputy chiefs of staff, but those positions were different than the original executive assistant for a particular policy area,

²¹ A distinctive feature of Edgar's first gubernatorial administration was his assignment of broadly related policy areas to "executive assistants," who constituted a "super-cabinet." The first six executive assistants were Michael Belletire, George Fleischli, Felicia Norwood, Allen Grosboll, Erhard Chorle, and Mary Ann Louderback.

which is what I became. So I didn't become a deputy chief or anything like that.

DePue: That's what I wanted to determine, so very good. What was the specific job that you had in that role, then?

Reineke: It was really to be the policy coordinator and the person responsible, up to the governor, for overseeing economic development policy for the state; which meant you oversaw various state of Illinois departments, like the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Employment Security, the Department of Financial Institutions, the Illinois Lottery—any of those agencies that fundamentally had to do with business in the state. It was a pretty diverse group of cabinet positions. So those directors, while they were direct gubernatorial appointments and would have a direct relationship with the governor, they also had a day-to-day reporting relationship to that executive assistant for whatever policy area—whether it be economic development or public safety or health, things like that.

DePue: These are still difficult times in the country, especially in Illinois, where a lot of those months Illinois had a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the country.

Reineke: It did. It's funny, when you look back into the early 1980s when we had a recession, and you look back to this time period that we're addressing in the nineties, the reality was, even then, while Illinois may have had a 7 or 8 percent unemployment number, it's still better than the situation that we're dealing with today.

DePue: Um-hm. I used that to kind of frame the rest of this conversation here in terms of economic assistance and economic development. I want you to flesh out for us what Edgar's vision was, as far as this was concerned, because this is coming off a time when a lot of the governors were doing smokestack chasing. I think that was the term that was used.

Reineke: Yeah, yeah. Everybody was chasing the potential dollars. It was sort of like a beauty contest—look at me, look at me—except it was a beauty contest where people offered incentives: if you pick me, I'll give you this too; oh, you want that, and they offered you that? Well, I can do that one better. So what happened was really—and this is not a criticism of the Thompson administration, which, as I've said, I was a part of, it was a reflection more of the time. Illinois, like you just referenced, like a lot of states, chased and waved whatever sort of tax benefits and incentive programs and grants and dollars and free land—all that good stuff—to get businesses.

I think what is so fascinating about the economic development sector, in terms of Jim Edgar, is it so reflected his personal philosophy, which was

not one of exuberance but one of measured action. So what Jim Edgar did for the state of Illinois is, he flipped the economic development model on its head from a statewide perspective. Rather than looking at, gee, there's the shiny new business that is soliciting for locations and wanting states to put incentive packages together, Jim Edgar said, Let's look at what's in the state already, and let's really play to our base. Let's emphasize what Illinois is good at, let's make it better, and let's assist them. Because I think what you had was a natural reaction to Illinois-grown businesses as one of the top two, three, or four states in terms of a corporate community in this country—along with New York and California. He basically said, Let's look at their priorities. Let's really address economic development from the perspective of, what can we do to help strengthen what's here in the state of Illinois already?

If you then take it a step further, I'd say there were four tenets—or you could say it's like a stool: economic development's the hub, and the spokes were the tax base and how that affected the appeal or the lack of appeal for businesses when they moved into the state of Illinois or considered staying in the state of Illinois. You had to look at the education environment, because that really goes to what businesses look at. I've been in the private sector now for twelve and a half years; you cannot ignore the quality of the workforce, the education of the workforce. And while other variables go into that kind of equation, you've got to have an educated workforce available to employers. So the tax structure foundation is one spoke; another spoke is education. A third spoke, frankly, is infrastructure and the ease of having to conduct business operations in a state. Are there quality conditions existing that make it easy for an area of the state to make itself appealing to a business for expansion or retention. I guess the fourth piece of that is really what Illinois is known for, the transportation hub of this nation, be it rail or roads or air—the transportation access. I think if you put all those things together—infrastructure, transportation, education, and the tax base—that goes to the fundamental issue of how you conduct an economic development policy.

As I said, it wasn't about trying to say, wow, here's the next new business we can get here, but it's like looking at it from the fact of, let's go to the quality of the foundation that exists. So I hope I don't sound too theoretical there, but I really do think that if you step back and look at it a little bit from an analytical perspective, those elements really made up his economic development policy, which was based on a fundamental belief and goal that you really need to take care of what's in Illinois first before you worry about what could happen next. I think that also helped diminish the frustration that the Illinois business community had at the time with watching so many new businesses come in and be given advantages that they themselves never had an opportunity to experience.

DePue: Does that mean that the business community embraced the things that Edgar was trying to do?

Reineke: Yeah, I think they really did. I don't know if there are any surveys or data out there that would prove that, but I think that was something that wound up being very popular because it plays to the tenets of what needs to happen to run a successful business. If you don't have good roads and you don't have good water supply and you don't have a good, educated workforce, and you're not tax-competitive, well, someone else is going to be better than you. Getting that model straight and out there from the start of the administration, and emphasizing it as you're trying to recover from a difficult economic environment, is extremely important and wound up being one of the reasons where you saw Illinois go from whatever I referenced before, 7, 8 percent unemployment, to—by the time the Edgar administration ends, and regardless of macroeconomic conditions—an unemployment rate that was something like 3 percent; significantly less, less than half of what the high unemployment number had been.

DePue: At the beginning of the administration, Illinois was running higher than the national unemployment rates, and at the end of the administration, they were lower than the national unemployment rates.

Reineke: So what does that tell the casual observer? That the state of Illinois did something right; that not only were you positioned from a disadvantage to one of the success stories from an economic perspective, which—again, allow me the commentary—is part of the sad situation the state's facing these days in terms of performance. For a variety of reasons, but I think it's lost some of its perceptual attractiveness as a place to do business.

DePue: One of the things you haven't mentioned that is often brought up in terms of whether or not businesses want to expand or move to the state, which is what economic activity and development is obviously all about, is tort reform. Is that something that the Edgar administration took up?

Reineke: Yeah, the Edgar administration took up a number of things that had to do with the legislative environment that businesses had to operate in. So when you had a situation where it was a divided government—in the sense that the executive branch was controlled by one party, the legislative branch was controlled by another—because of political constituencies, you cannot get a lot of things done that you may have campaigned on. But it doesn't mean you ignore them. So then you come off the midterm elections in 1994, where you have Republican control, and things can change—like tort reform—where, if you're trying to maintain a quality of life in the state, you're able to put on caps, you're able to limit libelous situations that professionals have to encounter, and limit lawsuits. And you can take that further; you can go to other pieces of legislation, the Structural Work Act, et cetera, that really put

Illinois in a disadvantageous position competitively with some of our—forget national—direct Midwestern neighbors.²²

Illinois right now is still in a challenging position to address some of that compared to some of our neighbors, particularly to the east of where we're sitting today. They've done a nice job in Indiana of making themselves attractive to businesses. I think one of the things—if you went back and looked at some of these national publications and national surveys and national associations that do evaluations and rankings—if you looked at the Edgar years in 1990, when you view them over the period of those eight years, you're going to see an administration that led economic development and recovery and advantage, which was recognized on a national basis,; which is not something we see a whole lot of these days in the Prairie State, unfortunately.

DePue: Not when you're sitting on a thirteen billion-dollar budget deficit.

Reineke: No, and I think, hey, could it be worse? Could we be California? Yeah, I guess we could be California. Could we be Michigan with a national industry that's challenged and hopefully will come back? We could. But (laughs) Illinois is not in a good place right now, in my opinion.

DePue: Let's talk about some specifics here. The first one I'll bring up just to see if it jogs your memory: Motorola and the competition with Wisconsin.

Reineke: Yeah. Let's see, there were a couple of Motorola opportunities during my time. One was up in Libertyville for cell phones, and the other was up in Harvard. The Department of Commerce and Community Affairs usually works with the local communities that are interested in being considered. I remember sitting down one time with Governor Edgar and the CEO, George Fisher, at Motorola, talking about business and economic conditions out in Schaumburg. But that became a really tough competition between Illinois and Wisconsin. Tommy Thompson at the time was the governor of Wisconsin, and they really put the full-court press on to attract Motorola with their new

²² The Structural Work Act (SWA) was an Illinois law dating from 1907 that provided protection for workers who suffered workplace injuries. Despite passage of the Workers' Compensation Acts in 1913, the legislature did not repeal the SWA, and a 1952 court decision allowed injured employees to file lawsuits against third parties under the SWA. Thus, injured workers could collect workman's compensation under their employer's coverage and still sue every other party connected with the project on which the accident occurred. The two systems of coverage resulted in higher insurance and legal costs compared to neighboring states. The issue is still contested, with labor advocates and legal interests supporting reinstatement of the measure. Alliance to Help Employment and Development, "Facts About the Structural Work Act" (2008), <http://www.buildingillinois.com/pdf/SWAFAQ2008-04.pdf>.

facility—to be decided where it was going to be. It wound up in Harvard, in McHenry County, Illinois.

It's interesting because it was sort of like an election or a sports game. It had so gone down to the wire that I can recall to this day—now many years ago—how uncertain we were that Motorola, even though it was a home state corporation, would pick Illinois over Wisconsin. So if anybody ever tells you—anyone involved in it—thought it always going to be in Illinois, I think they were mistaken. I think there were electric rate issues and water issues, and some of the infrastructure capabilities that I just referenced a few minutes ago played into that opportunity Wisconsin was offering Motorola. But lo and behold, Motorola obviously made the right decision from an Illinois perspective and chose to locate here.

DePue: But this scenario that you just developed makes it sound like here was a case where there was some smokestack chasing going on between Illinois and Wisconsin.

Reineke: Yeah. Here's how I would describe it: I would never want to generalize and say that any time there's a decision that has to be made where you may have one or two competitor states for the location or relocation or expansion of a business, it means that you're never going to be compared to other states—you are. It's really what you're putting into that. If you're putting your state, in my opinion, at a disadvantage by doing something for a new entity, or doing something for a particular decision that fundamentally goes against your principles, then I think that's what smokestack chasing is. That is not to say, gee, we have such a nice situation here in Illinois. We're not going to have any discussion; you get to pick.

DePue: So you're suggesting that what was going on was Illinois boosterism and not sweetening the pot?

Reineke: Yeah, I would say that it goes back to, would we put the best package together that went along with the Edgar administration principles, whether it was investing in industrial training program dollars so that workers are going to be trained or retrained, whether it was community development assistance programs for local communities. You put all that stuff together—

DePue: Improving the transportation network.

Reineke: Exactly. Do they need new roads? At the end of the day, to get trucks in and out, or whatever the scenario might need, that, to me, is not the same thing as saying, Oh, we're going to cut your tax rate; Oh, we're going to create a special opportunity for you; Oh, by the way, we're going to give you a certain amount of cash dollars now to help make you find us more attractive. It's interesting, because I just finished a book about another governor, a governor of Alabama, who has had legal problems for a number of years, which I guess

are in flux right now in terms of the appeals process. But watching what they did when they had to attract Mercedes-Benz for a facility and watching what they had to do to attract Honda for a manufacturing facility—those situations, when you look at the particulars, illustrate to me what smokestack chasing is all about.

DePue: Yeah, that phrase is a mouthful. It's a tongue-twister.

Reineke: Yeah, it is a tongue-twister.

DePue: How about the Maytag situation down in Galesburg? I think they were toying with the notion of moving.

Reineke: Yeah, and that was another good example of a company that was retained in Illinois through being offered the same fundamental assistance that the department was willing to put forward. Let me just say one thing about that. Whether it was Motorola—or as I learned to call it on the private-sector client side, Moto, who was a client of ours for a number of years—or whether it was Maytag, I think there's an element of home state pride that does go into a situation. I think most businesses, for the quality of their workforce and their relationships in the situation, given all things being equal, will choose to stay in their own state or expand in their own state. I think it's really when you get to an onerous situation that a business has to make that hard decision and say, no, it's time to leave; it's time to go somewhere else.

I look back, and over the years I worked in the administration, particularly with the focus on economic development, I don't think there were that many times or situations where Illinois lost. I won't say we were batting a thousand, but I think our average was pretty good, if we went back and looked at it from a historical perspective. That's what I was charged with—making sure the bad didn't happen, the bad being a situation that went against Illinois. I think Jim Edgar and his administration and everybody involved with it deserve a lot of credit over that period for retaining and expanding businesses here in the state of Illinois.

DePue: Here's one that doesn't normally come up in this discussion, but I think it's certainly relevant. This is a timeframe during BRAC, during the Base Realignment and Adjustment Act. There were some serious questions because you had Great Lakes Naval Training Center; you had Scott Air Force Base, whether that was going to close; and you had Chanute, in Rantoul.

Reineke: Yeah, that's right. Obviously those bases are big economic engines, whether it's up in Lake County or down in the Metro-East area or eastern central Illinois.²³ It makes a big difference. I'm trying to recall as you mention this, if Sam Skinner was a part of that process or not; Sam may have been. If I recall

²³ Metro-East is the region composed of the suburbs lying east of St. Louis, in Illinois.

correctly, there was a team that was put together and announced, and Sam may have been a part of that. Obviously, Sam would have been cognizant and aware of the Illinois perspective since he's from Chicago.

DePue: Is he coming from private business, or is he in the administration?

Reineke: No, Sam was George Bush's chief of staff, so he would have been back in the private sector, either at a company or a law firm at the time. But I don't want to misspeak here. Sam may not have been involved with it, but for some reason it's sticking in the back of my mind that he may have been. But regardless of who the particular members of the BRAC Commission were at the time, obviously we worked very closely with the Washington delegation.²⁴ When all is said and done, the reality is those military facilities and operations are the same as a business: they bring dollars into the community. Whether it's military personnel or it's private sector contractors, nonmilitary employees—they live, work, and spend dollars in those communities, and they're a significant economic impact to them. That's why you saw such a competition for bases in local communities around the country to stay open. It really was the same as a large manufacturing facility, whether they were going to stay, move, close, expand, whatever.

DePue: Did you have a role to play in preparing to go before BRAC or to argue the case for Illinois saving some of these locations?

Reineke: Yeah, I played a role as an economic development advisor at the time, but I don't recall ever being as deeply enmeshed in those kinds of situations, because at a certain level, there's only so much the state can do. It wasn't as if you're putting together resources or incentives like a training program or, gee, we're going to improve the water supply or the roads or whatever, so it's a little bit different. From an economic development macro perspective, it's very similar; from an operational perspective, your fate's—I don't want to say out of your hands, but it's not quite the same set of rules you have to operate by. But it has the same impact at the end of the day if they are retained or they're closed.

DePue: The next one probably falls in the same category. I can't recall exactly when this finally passed, but NAFTA was certainly much in discussion during the time that Edgar was governor.

Reineke: Yeah, it was, and Governor Edgar was extremely supportive of it. From a public perception and a lobbying point of view, the governor was a strong advocate for, whether it was speaking out on it or doing interviews or speeches or meetings. If I recall correctly, Bill Daley, who actually co-chairs

²⁴ Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). The close cooperation between Edgar's administration and the Illinois congressional delegation was also a feature of transportation policy. Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 46-47 and 105-107.

an education reform group with Governor Edgar right now—Advantage Illinois—

DePue: The current mayor's brother.

Reineke: Yes, the former secretary of commerce. I think Bill was charged by President Clinton at the time with leading the charge for NAFTA and getting it approved by Congress.

DePue: That gets me to the point of asking you about organized labor: how supportive was organized labor of a lot of these initiatives and the vision that Edgar had towards economic development?

Reineke: I think that Jim Edgar and his predecessor Jim Thompson were both unusual, in that organized labor in the state were generally pretty supportive of both of their administrations and their campaigns. More particular to what you're saying in terms of economic development, I think the fact that you didn't have a lot of situations where there was labor strife and significant problems caused by union relationships—Jim Edgar could pick up the phone and talk to various union leaders—helped to create a better economic climate and a better situation in terms of businesses having to make those decisions about their economic future.

DePue: One of the things I know the governor was focused on was expanding foreign trade opportunities. That's in part what NAFTA is all about. But I get the sense that he took a little bit different approach than Thompson would have taken, especially in terms of establishing international enclaves, if you will.

Reineke: Yeah, I think it's tied right back to the fundamental economic foundations and policy beliefs. In other words, rather than have a lot of international trade missions and look for opportunities for businesses or companies to only locate here in Illinois, or have more of a generalized approach to how you bring more dollars into Illinois, I think this goes back to the fundamental belief that you take your strengths and you play to it. I think Illinois was one of the largest exporters, and I think the Edgar administration's focus was on, how do we take those businesses here in Illinois and help provide opportunities for them to sell more of their products around the globe?²⁵ I think that's really what the focus became. It was not so much to have—and I don't mean this in a flippant way—a bunch of outposts around the world that wave the Illinois flag, but—

²⁵ In 1995 and 1996, Illinois ranked 5th in the U.S. for combined manufactured and non-manufactured exports. Since 1997, it has ranked 6th. U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Statistics, "U.S. Trade in Goods by State, Based on Origin of Movement, by NAICS-Based Product: Current and Historical Releases," http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/state/origin_movement/index.html.

DePue: Was that the Thompson approach?

Reineke: I think there was more of that in the Thompson administration. Fundamentally, that's what it was to have international representation. Again, maybe that was the right thing—it could very well have been for the 1980s—but you had to basically reboot the approach to economic development in Illinois. We've got these companies here; how do we make it easier and smarter for them to sell more on the international market? That's really what I think the economic policy of the Edgar administration was.

DePue: What did the administration see as the natural products for which we can expand exports?

Reineke: It's what our economic base is. It's manufacturing products in terms of the new markets overseas. Obviously there's some agricultural, but fundamentally, I believe, it was what Illinois makes and what's built here, and then how you can sell it to those emerging markets around the globe.

DePue: Manufacturing, more than corn and soybeans and hogs?

Reineke: Like I said, I don't want to discount the agricultural. I don't know the statistics in terms of Illinois agriculture and how much is kept in the state, how much is exported around the country—quite a lot around the U.S.—versus how much above and beyond the U.S., the non-U.S. marketplace, is agriculture. I'm sure that is a lot of it, but there's a lot of it from California, too, and a lot of it from Florida and other places.²⁶

DePue: We've spent quite a bit of time on this subject. Do you have anything else you want to say about those two years that you were working in this position?

Reineke: I have to say that, if I look back on my career, my years working on economic development with Jim Edgar and the administration were probably among my most satisfying, because you were able to see tangible results where jobs were retained or created in the state. Every time a business made a decision to stay here, I felt great, because I was doing my little part to help create an environment so that they made that decision. It was a win. It was, like I said, like a political campaign or winning a baseball game, something like that.

DePue: This is the perfect segue, because my next question is: How long did you stay in that position? Was it to the end of 1994?

Reineke: It was to the end of 1994.

²⁶ In 1995 for example, Illinois exported \$21,325,200,000 worth of manufactured commodities (4 percent of the U.S. total), versus \$838,100,000 (1.5 percent of the U.S. total) of non-manufactured commodities. These figures are for foreign trade.

DePue: The reason I phrased the question that way is because 1994 is the reelection campaign year for Governor Edgar. How much did you get involved in that campaign?

Reineke: I was involved in terms of the governmental side. I said earlier that you cannot separate what happens in government in terms of policy—that's what voters vote on, they vote on your record in office—from the campaign. I did not work on the campaign. I guess you could say I did what I could by working as the economic development assistant advisor, knowing that those results would reflect on the perception of the campaign. When I talked about the good feeling I had about a business making a decision to stay in Illinois, the reality is (laughs) if a bunch of those decisions—the Nabiscos and the Tootsie Rolls, and we mentioned the Motorolas and the Maytags, and the Crown boats—had gone against Illinois, that (laughs) would have affected the campaign and the perception of the reelect. Not to say it would have changed the outcome, but I think it certainly would have made it a more challenging environment to run a reelection campaign in.

DePue: The Democrats had quite a contested campaign at the primary level that year. You had Roland Burris, you had Richard Phelan, and you had Dawn Clark Netsch.

Reineke: Right.

DePue: Would you be willing to say who the Edgar administration preferred to have out of those three as an opponent?

Reineke: I'm not trying to evade or not answer the question—I'm not sure there was any... (pause) Again, it's all speculation—who's stronger, who's weaker. I personally believe people are naïve if they think that there's a particular candidate that could be better or stronger than another candidate, and therefore, gee, if this person won, we're in better shape. Obviously, Roland, who I've worked with in the succeeding years a number of times, was a statewide officeholder, and Dawn was a well-respected legislator. Dick Phelan was well-known and viewed as an up-and-comer at the time on the state political scene. So I think there was probably speculation on who would win and things like that, but I don't think the Edgar administration or the Edgar team, be it the official team or the larger team, had particularly strong views—at least I know I didn't. I don't know if other former colleagues expressed a view on that, but I myself did not. One could argue you had a well-respected legislator that had been around the Illinois Con-Con [Constitutional Convention] and people knew; one could argue that Roland knew the finances of the state, Roland as comptroller—

DePue: Netsch was the comptroller.

Reineke: Oh, at the time? Oh, yeah, Roland—I'm sorry—was the attorney general. So you had people, though, who knew state government; I don't think necessarily there was one person that was viewed as a stronger or weaker candidate.

DePue: Netsch obviously won that campaign, and some would say on the strength of her pool-playing ability, at least the—

Reineke: Oh, the commercial. I remember that now, yeah.

DePue: —the commercial on that. Your assessment of Netsch as an opponent?

Reineke: To use the expression, I think she had to find her water legs during the campaign. So even though she had a legislative record, was the comptroller at the time, and was well-respected—I have a lot of personal respect for her; highly intelligent and distinguished, honorable—like I referenced Jim Edgar back in 1982, I don't think that she was a natural campaigner. I think that, if anything, she may have been perceived as more of—with all due respect, Mark—an academician, which is a different kind of role when you're on the public stage. I think that you have to play to your audiences differently when you're dealing with the media or you're dealing with the general public and campaign crowds and events. Again, I referenced Jim Edgar earlier. I think Jim Edgar learned how to do that, but when you're put in that role, whether it's Dawn Clark Netsch running for governor or whether it's Jim Edgar running for secretary of state the first time, there's a learning curve. It takes a little transition, a little period of growth. I don't think her persona, regardless of the effective television commercial, was very good. I'm not sure that she had the best natural talent at the time to take advantage of the nomination.

DePue: Certainly Edgar was trying to emphasize the—

Reineke: The tax increase? (laughs)

DePue: —the policy differences. It certainly focused on the tax increase.

Reineke: And death penalty.

DePue: Yeah.

Reineke: Definitely. I think if you had to take a step back from that, the fact that the Edgar campaign came out of the box so early and spent money on television and framed Dawn at the time, I think from that point on—not to sound cocky or overly sure of one's self—I think she had an uphill battle.²⁷ Once you painted the opponent—who didn't have as much money as you did—in a certain way on fundamental issues, I think it put her at a disadvantage moving forward. I think, actually, if you took the calendar up to today, we're going to see a fascinating gubernatorial campaign, because of the situation that

²⁷ See Hendren, April 28, 2009, 38, for the decision to start advertising early.

Governor Quinn faces right now in terms of having to address the issue of raising taxes to deal with the economic crisis in Illinois.

DePue: Would this be a fair assessment of Netsch: that she was part of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, much more to the left than some other candidates might have been?

Reineke: Yeah, I think that's probably fair. I think that's probably what we tried to do—the greater “we,” the campaign—in terms of positioning her in a certain way, that, oh, she was out there in terms of her political philosophy. Not that any of her positions may be inherently or intrinsically wrong, depending on one's personal view, but in America, the extremes always have a difficult time in terms of how they're identified. Again, I don't want to reference something—the current gubernatorial campaign—but that's why it will be so fascinating to watch in terms of how both sides try to paint the other candidate.

DePue: Well, you might want to spend just a minute on that because it might be forty years from now when somebody's listening to this and saying, what exactly was he talking about?

Reineke: Right. I guess I can say that if the Republicans can figure out how to paint incoming Governor Quinn as a big-tax Democrat governor, and whether he has really learned how to be governor—but I really wouldn't focus too much on that; I would go for the basic and the easy: more taxes in this economic climate, which hopefully we're coming out of—that's going to be a big advantage for the Republican candidate, Sen. Bill Brady, who most people don't know right now. The flip side of that is, if Governor Quinn can paint state Senator Brady as an extreme right-winger in terms of his views on social policy and social issues, I think it's going to be a challenge for Senator Brady to get elected in what is continuing to be a strong blue state; which is why I think there's a difference between that campaign and what we'll see in the Senate race with Mark Kirk, who's much more of a moderate Republican.

DePue: We need to get you out of here pretty quickly, so we're going to have to draw to a close, but I think we're at a pretty good point in time. I have just a couple more questions dealing with the campaign season in 1994. One of them doesn't have much to do with campaigning at all; it has to do with Governor Edgar, on July 7, 1994, suddenly finding himself in the hospital because he just had heart bypass surgery.

Reineke: Right, right.

DePue: Remember hearing about that?

Reineke: Yeah. It was a pretty scary and questionable time because—and I can say that now as a man in his fifties (laughs)—any time you deal with a heart situation, and if there's a history of heart problems in the family, you really don't know

what's going to happen. We're subject to the advice and direction of medical professionals. We're not skilled, so all you can do is sit back and listen. I think that also brings home a reality of the frailty of human life.

But it was an interesting dynamic. I guess if you wanted to be very—I don't know if "cynical" is the right word—but one could argue, how does that play into the political environment? Is that helpful or not helpful? I personally think it's irrelevant, but I think, perceptually, that could work into people's decision-making—whether that individual's up to the job or not up to the job from a physical perspective. The flip side of all that is, minus the heart issues, Jim Edgar's personal lifestyle—being very aware of how he takes care of himself and what he eats, and he doesn't drink, and he exercises and rides bikes and hikes and rides horses—I think probably, if anything, negated any concerns about a health issue. I think people were very concerned and cared about what happened to him. But it happened, and obviously sitting here today, everything turned out fine from that incident.

DePue: As you recall Netsch, did she make any issue of his health in the campaign?

Reineke: I don't think she did, if I recall correctly. If it was, I don't recall it, but I don't think she did. But again, maybe that's something that's slipped my mind.

DePue: One final question in this 1994 campaign: at the national level, this was a huge Republican year. Did that factor into the campaign in Illinois?

Reineke: Hard to say. I think Jim Edgar would have been elected by a very large (laughs) margin, regardless.

DePue: He won by 60 percent to Netsch's 34 percent. That's a trouncing in anybody's definition.

Reineke: Yeah, right. So would it have been, I don't know, 58 to 36? None of us will ever know that. So I don't think that was a real issue, the national Republican tide. The reason I say that is, when you have high visibility offices and candidates like a governor—perhaps a senator, although senators are not generally as well-known as governors—I think it's less of a factor what happens at the national level. I'm not saying it's completely absent, I'm not naïve about that—perhaps the margin would have been affected around the edges—but I still think he would have won by an overwhelming majority.

DePue: But he will, coming into 1995, have one significant benefit from all of this, because isn't that the timeframe, the two-year window, when the Republicans control both the House and the Senate in Illinois?

Reineke: Right. For the first time in a very long time the Republicans controlled the legislative branch as well as the executive branch. I know we'll continue it in our next conversation, but that made for some interesting challenges as well. There's good, but there's always the not-so-good.

DePue: Yeah, if you're willing, we'll actually go into some of the personalities there as well, because I think that's part of the fascination of the subject.

Reineke: I would be happy to. I spent a lot of time with all of those individuals as the chief of staff.

DePue: We got you right up to the cusp of your chief-of-staff years, because at the beginning of his second term, he's going to offer you that position. But we'll start with that story of how you ended up being chief of staff at the beginning of our next session.

Reineke: We can start with the conversation that he and I had, and I can start with the other people that I know, my colleagues on the staff who were in consideration for the role as well. It's an interesting story.

DePue: Now I'm really looking forward to that because this has been a lot of fun just listening to these first four years, but there's more to come.

Reineke: Sounds good.

DePue: Thank you very much, Gene.

Reineke: Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview #2)

Interview with Gene Reineke

ISG-A-L-2009-038.03

Interview # 3: June 4, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

DePue: Today is Friday, June 4, 2010. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is my third session with Gene Reineke. Good afternoon, Gene.

Reineke: Hello, Mark, nice to see you again.

DePue: We are at his office, the Hill & Knowlton office, in the Merchandise Mart in downtown Chicago, one of the hubs of commerce in Chicago area. You mentioned, before we got started today, that you wanted to correct a couple things from our last session, so I'll turn it over to you to begin with here.

Reineke: Sure, Mark. I just wanted to very briefly clarify three different issues that we talked about last time. We raised the issue of the 1992 presidential campaign in Illinois, and the question was posed in our discussion: Did Bill Clinton capture a majority—50 percent, plus one—of the vote against George H. W. Bush and Ross Perot last time? I said I thought he had not, and he indeed had not. He received 48-point-something percent, so Perot and Bush's votes together would have had the majority that was won.

The second was when we were talking about economic development. I was saying that while both manufacturing and agricultural exporting were important priorities during the administration, we seemed to focus more on manufacturing. So I went back and looked at some statistics, not just from the nineties but also current day. It's really interesting because Illinois manufacturing is significantly larger in terms of exports than Illinois agricultural exports, both in the U.S. as well as on a global basis. I think it was a five-to-six ratio in terms of dollars—manufacturing export dollars over agricultural export dollars—which I didn't realize till I actually put the two up against each other and looked at them.

Then the third is rather light. I had mentioned about going to one of the Republican national conventions. I thought it had been 1992, which was the re-nomination of George H. W. Bush, where the Illinois delegation, as had been suggested by then-state senator Pate Philip, wore orange sport coats—one half of the Illini orange and blue. It wasn't 1992; rather, it was the New Orleans convention in 1988 where we had the *privilege* of wearing those orange (laughter) sport coats. That was with the original nomination of then-vice president George H. W. Bush for the Republican nomination. So I wanted to make sure we had that cleared up.

DePue: Very good, and I appreciate you doing that, because obviously these are important historical documents that we're creating here. We want to make sure that we're as accurate as possible, so I really appreciate that.

When we left off last time, we had finished off with Edgar's campaign in 1994, which he won by a huge margin against Dawn Clark Netsch. But then we get into the period of time when you have a significant change of job. That's what we want to start with: your selection as the chief of staff.

Reineke: Right. I spoke with the governor sometime in November, post-election, in 1994. I remember we had a conversation; he invited me over to the executive mansion and said that he wanted to talk with me about becoming his next chief of staff, to

replace Jim Reilly, who had been the chief of staff at that time. It visually has always remained with me because it was around dusk; the sun was going down when we had the conversation in his private office over at the governor's mansion. I was very honored to be asked and considered for such a position, but I remember having the conversation with the governor, asking, why did he think I would be a good candidate—not that I didn't think I could do the job, but I wanted to hear from his perspective. He laid out in terms of my experiences, my management operations, and as he had known me at that time probably a good ten years since I first—as I mentioned previously—sat down with him for lunches on an informal basis. There were a couple other folks around on staff at that time I know were also considered, but I was honored and pleased the governor asked me to take the position. I accepted it, of course, and I started in December of 1994 as his chief of staff.

DePue: So immediately after the election and before the second inauguration.

Reineke: Yeah, that's right.

DePue: How long did you end up serving in the capacity of chief of staff?

Reineke: I left in February of 1998, so what does that come out to, roughly? Three and a half years or so.

DePue: So you saw the lion's share of the second administration, and that was a busy administration. He certainly had a different kind of challenge the second time around than the first, and that's obviously what we'll be talking about.

Before we start, though, two men had been chiefs of staff before you got to the position. One was Kirk Dillard, who ended up running for the legislature; that's why he stepped down. Then for one year during that election campaign, Jim Reilly. I wonder if you can do a little bit of compare-and-contrast between yourself and those two gentlemen.

Reineke: Sure. I would say that I'm somewhere in the middle between the personalities and operating styles of both Jim and Kirk. The interesting thing is, I had worked with Kirk Dillard in the Thompson administration when Kirk ran Governor Thompson's legislative office.²⁸ I held a number of positions in that gubernatorial administration, so I knew Kirk very well. And I also knew Jim very well because Jim had served for a period of time as Jim Thompson's chief of staff after he was Jim Thompson's legal counsel. I had worked for him directly, as one of his deputies, on a daily basis; myself and Kathy Selcke worked with Jim every day. So I had the ability to know both Kirk and Jim on a personal basis. I admire both

²⁸ Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, September 29, 2009, 48-70. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

of them. They have different characteristics and different personalities; I think I'm probably an interesting blend of both styles.

DePue: Well, you've been very diplomatic up to this point. Let's start with Kirk Dillard and his mode of operation and his personality as chief of staff.

Reineke: I think Kirk's strength is he's a very good people person, which means he can get along with most folks. Actually, I would describe both Kirk and Jim as politically moderate, and that means they were politically pragmatic when it came to dealing with the legislature. The fact that Kirk ran Thompson's legislative office, and the fact that Jim was a state legislator from Jacksonville prior to entering the executive branch, gave them both a unique perspective—particularly working for Jim Edgar, who also, as a legislative staffer and a legislator, understood the importance of having to look for common ground between the two branches of government.

So Kirk would operate—I would describe it—as more of a macro strategy. If he felt somebody had the qualities and the capabilities to get something done, Kirk would want to work with them and suggest, Here's what we want to do; go down a particular path. But from a day-to-day detail perspective, he didn't delve into the weeds like that. It was more his style to find some common ground, what made sense.

On the other hand, Jim is what I would describe myself as, a type-A personality, which means Jim can be very intense. I think Jim Reilly, who's a friend of mine to this day—as is Kirk—does Facebook count if we friend each other on there? (DePue laughs) But seriously—as you know, Jim just took over the operations of McCormick Place and Navy Pier again.²⁹ Jim is a very intense individual. He's one of the most intelligent people I have ever met—very sharp mind. Jim—and I think Jim would admit—is not necessarily, in terms of his operating style, a warm and fuzzy personality. Jim can have a short fuse. I was a witness to that.³⁰ I was never on the receiving end of it, thank goodness—I say that good-naturedly—Jim didn't suffer fools gladly. But Jim was able to get things done, and frankly, he's one of the hardest workers I've ever had the pleasure of being around, experiencing how things get done and how you make things happen. But like Kirk, he was very pragmatic too, in terms of what needed to be accomplished.

This is just my perspective, but if I had to describe both of them politically, I would argue that Kirk, perhaps because he had political ambitions—obviously running for governor recently, but as a state legislator—is probably more moderate to conservative. I would argue that Jim is more moderate to—I use the term “progressive” now, which apparently has replaced the word “liberal” in the

²⁹ Reilly was the CEO of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (McPier) from 1989 to 1999, before taking over the position again in 2010.

³⁰ Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009, 49.

political lexicon. I think Jim is more of a bigger government type of personality, more activist, more interventionist, whereas Kirk was more of a traditional Republican. I don't know if that's just the result of particular circumstances or because that was really an evolution on Jim's part from being a local legislator, worrying about Jacksonville and Morgan County issues, to someone who had a statewide perspective and knew we had to work with the city of Chicago and the metropolitan area, which I think could lead to a fuller, more progressive view on a lot of issues.³¹

DePue: It's probably worth mentioning here that Kirk Dillard is just off of what's got to be a very difficult defeat. He lost the primary race for governor on the Republican ticket by, what, two hundred—some votes?³²

Reineke: Something like that, I think, the final number. It may have even dropped right below the two hundred number. To Kirk's credit, I think Kirk did the right thing from a Republican Party perspective, to not put the party through a long process of recount and challenges. That's always been an issue, just as a sidebar. When parties get into contested primaries and don't have the ability to heal quickly, I think it more often than not can put them at a disadvantage for the fall election. I think I've seen that happen a number of times over the years for not just governor but for other offices as well.

DePue: You've described two very different personalities here. In part what you've described for Jim Reilly is a no-nonsense guy, type-A personality, something of the enforcer on the staff, the person who makes the boss's intentions happen. Would that be a fair assessment?

Reineke: Yeah, I think so, but I also think that Jim brought another dimension with him, and that's really as the generator of ideas. I'll tell you why I say that. I say that because I'm going to go back to my Thompson years when I worked with and around Jim. Jim really was instrumental in talking with Governor Thompson at the time about the need for a statewide infrastructure program, as we've mentioned before, called Build Illinois. If I recall correctly—and it's a long time ago—Jim actually worked away from the office to put that idea together over a period of days and how it was generated. So that was very indicative to me that he was able to come up with concepts that were necessary for the state, important for the administration to get behind and to advocate for, but also had the ability to put it together from a strategic plan perspective.

³¹ Reilly does not address this observation directly, but a possible influence on his orientation toward government was his education at U of C law school under the founder of administrative law, Kenneth Culp Davis. Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 10, 2009, 9.

³² In the closely contested primary between seven candidates, Brady defeated Dillard by 193 votes (155,527-155,334). State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Primary, February 2, 2010*.

That's unique, because I think in the chief of staff role, there are all different styles. You can look at the current Obama administration model with Rahm Emanuel; I think Rahm is probably more of that enforcer, particularly in some of the public stories that you've read. You can look at a Bush administration chief of staff, Andy Card, who was probably less of a strategist and—I don't mean this disrespectfully—more of a gatekeeper, more of a traffic cop, making sure the trains ran on time. That may be a reflection of not only their own personalities but what the president expected out of their various chiefs of staff. The same thing applies, I think, on the gubernatorial level in terms of different styles. Kirk's style was very different than Jim's style. I think I was a bit of a combination of both, but I think I maybe leaned a bit more to the Jim Reilly style just because of my own personality.

DePue: Were there discussions at the beginning of this relationship as the chief of staff, where Governor Edgar sat you down and said, "This is what I want you to do and this is how I want you to conduct business for the office?"

Reineke: No. We spoke every day several times. It wasn't anything specific like that. He had a point of view in terms of expectations. Again, I think this is really reflective of the Edgar approach to a situation versus the Thompson approach. I think Governor Edgar was looking for the ability of staff to come to some consensus on a recommendation and then take it to him to proceed. So I think one of the things the governor was looking for was someone who had the ability to get the respect and input from other senior colleagues in the administration, be they a cabinet member or be they a direct governor staffer. I think that's what he expected from me, and I think I was able to achieve that, at least based on all the feedback I've received over the years.

DePue: What were your expectations, then?

Reineke: Make sure I didn't screw anything up too badly. (DePue laughs) I knew I was going to have to get along with the legislative leadership, and I wanted to make sure that we were able to implement the governor's programs as successfully as possible. I'm not a personality that likes to fail at anything. As I've gotten older I've realized we can't get everything we wanted in life sometimes. But I'm very demanding on myself, and I'm demanding on others. I think it was really to, first of all, understand what the job required; make sure in areas of public policy and state government that I understood what went into a lot of very complex programs that I may not have had a whole lot of experience with prior to being chief of staff. I had a lot of government experience, but not in all areas.

I think my fundamental issue that I wanted to concentrate on and work on was getting the respect of others on the staff who may have had a different impression of me for whatever reason from prior experiences—may have not worked with me, or in some cases may have considered themselves as candidates for chief of staff. Sometimes that can leave a little bit of an awkward situation, as I saw when I watched the succession race, for lack of a better term, under Jim Thompson

when his chief of staff, Art Quern, left government, and he had three people competing or positioning for consideration for that role. You didn't have anything like that with the Edgar administration, but I was aware that I had to make sure I was able to, in my mind, convince and prove that I was the real deal; that I did have the ability to not only do the job, but get the respect from people that I know I needed in order to be successful on behalf of the governor.

DePue: Did Edgar lay out his priorities for the second term up front?

Reineke: I don't really recall in terms of specific programs. The one thing I will say: earlier in the first administration, where the economy, the recession, was such an important priority—it was the reality of life for eleven-and-a-half to twelve million Illinoisans at the time. I think he viewed the second administration as really the opportune time—particularly with the '94 midterm elections, where you had Republicans at the national level get control of Congress—to achieve a lot of his programs and priorities; whether they were personal priorities such as education reform and attention to education in Illinois, or whether they were philosophical priorities that were more in tune with what a traditional Republican Party belief would be. Some of that's the reform of welfare and something else I know we're going to touch on today, state government reorg. [reorganization] I think those midterm election results offered an opportunity to say, "Okay, this is what we're going to go for next," not knowing whether or not he was going to choose to run for a third term come 1998. So that issue was not in the equation—How does this position us next time around? It was really, How do we achieve some more significant things, particularly with the large mandate that Jim Edgar received in terms of the election results over Dawn Clark Netsch.

DePue: How was the internal office for the governor organized? Was there any reorganization that was going on, or rethinking of that?

Reineke: Yeah, there was. There were several personnel moves that happened in the early part of the second term. We made Howard Peters, who had been at Corrections, deputy chief of staff, with oversight responsibilities over a number of agencies more on the human services side, with some law enforcement.³³ Then, Andy Foster, who had worked as campaign manager for the governor's reelect, wanted to come into government. I think the governor saw Andy had a lot of good personal skills in terms of how he got along with people—extremely smart, good strategist. Andy came in as a deputy chief of staff, with responsibility over a number of other state agencies, a lot of the regulatory and administrative-type agencies.

DePue: I'm going to run through some of the other key players and just get your reaction to some of these names.

Reineke: I can't say I like everybody? (DePue laughs)

³³ Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, January 21, 2010, 26-39.

DePue: I imagine if I start listing these off, you'll have a positive opinion of most all of them.

Reineke: I'm sure I will.

DePue: Mike Lawrence.

Reineke: Ah, Mike Lawrence is great. I think Mike and I got off to a little bumpy start earlier on. We never had any confrontation earlier, but I think that I didn't know Mike and Mike didn't know me. I came out of the Thompson administration, and Mike was still a journalist back then. I had been the head of personnel, the patronage chief in those days, and ran Build Illinois. I don't know if I had a reputation in a certain way or not. But I think what happened was Mike and I got to work together, and we got to be, frankly, very close friends. You know, Mike and I still stay in touch—not as often as I'd like because of my schedule—but when Mike comes up to Chicago we grab lunch or whatever. We stay in regular e-mail contact. I think we both grew to respect each other a lot.

Mike could get agitated at times, and I think I was actually a fairly good counterbalance to that. While I also have that ability to get agitated, when I'm in a situation with somebody that can get excited about an issue or a situation, I usually have a tendency to go the other way and try to take it a notch down. I'll tell you, some of my fondest memories of the Edgar years were with Mike, whether it was the crisis *du jour* at five o'clock in the afternoon, or whether it was just looking over—a final set of eyes—on a news release that he and his team were going to put out, because I've always been a stickler for nuances in writing. Mike and I used to go have lunch at least once a week in Springfield at Chili's or Applebee's or something like that, and we'd usually order the same thing and make little humorous remarks about some of the food we'd order. Mike's a great guy—lots of respect for him.

DePue: Mike, of course, was the press secretary, which explains why the crisis *du jour* became important for the chief of staff and the press secretary. But did he have a larger role than just the press secretary?

Reineke: Definitely. I would say Mike's role was as not only a senior counselor on substantive policy issues, besides press secretary—because there is a very different model—but I also think that Mike operated as a personal confidant or *consigliere* type of role for the governor. I think the governor respected Mike—respected his years in Springfield, respected his independence. Mike did not come out of a Republican background, which I had originally come out of. He brought a different perspective to things, one that was generally more liberal or more progressive than others on the governor's staff, and definitely, I would say, more socially advanced than perhaps your traditional Illinois Republican would see an issue. Mike had certain priorities around mental health issues, which were important to him. Mike, back in his press secretary role of chief speechwriter, was the fellow the governor would look to, to initially put the original thoughts on

paper when he was going to deliver a major speech—be it the State of the State or a budget address, or a particular policy issue that was going to be dealt with by the governor. So the governor and Mike—very close, and they remain close to this day. I'll talk to one and usually wind up hearing about the other.

DePue: (laughs) How about the legal counsel he had at that time? Was that Bill Roberts?

Reineke: Um-hm, that was Bill. We're in the second term, because Arnie Kanter was in the first term. So Bill, who had been the U.S. attorney for the central district—based in Springfield but for central Illinois—Bill came in as chief counsel. Again, Bill and I got along very well. Bill has a very calming, soothing personality. He's good analytically, but he's also very much able to look at options and in consultation with others say, This is the recommendation of the path I believe we should go down. Really good fellow. I believe he still runs Hinshaw Culbertson law firm, based here in Chicago, to this day.

DePue: Mark Boozell—was he a legislative liaison at the time?

Reineke: Yeah, Mark was the legislative director. I think Mark had been, prior to that, the Senate liaison for the governor, but—

DePue: I know Steve Selcke started for a very short period of time—

Reineke: Steve did, yeah.

DePue: —that transition from Thompson to Edgar, and then Mark took over from him fairly early in the administration.

Reineke: Yeah. I'm thinking it was just a short window there when Mark had the Senate role, but I may be wrong about that. But Mark was the legislative director. Mark had a more excitable personality, which is a good way to describe it. I'm a good friend of Mark's. We still have lunch here in Chicago when I'm in town. Mark was good at handling the different personalities of the legislators. I would say Mark was more aggressive in the sense that, if I had to look at it from my perspective, I had the ability to make sure people understood our point of view, but I also think Mark had the ability to play hardball when he had to. I think that's really what you need in that position in a lot of ways, because you can't be a head of legislative affairs—while you want to be an advocate for members of the legislature when you believe their views coincide or when you have to work towards a compromise... I think Mark was very practical about that. I think he was very good, particularly with the Senate Republicans. I think he had Carter Hendren's respect; he got along with Pate Philip, so I think that helped a lot. Mark got along on the Democratic side of the aisle as well.

DePue: I know that one of the relationships that he certainly fostered was with Mike Madigan.

Reineke: With the Speaker, yeah. That was a good relationship there. Frankly, while Speaker Madigan wasn't Speaker during the early time we're talking about here, '95 and '96, as we know, that eventually flipped back in terms of control of the House chamber. But yeah, Mark got along with the Speaker very well.

DePue: Did you have many direct relations with the legislators?

Reineke: I did, because what would happen is, if a particular legislator couldn't get what they needed from the legislative office, I would be, not the court of final appeal—that's always the governor—but I'd be pretty close because (laughs) as chief of staff I could undo something or make something occur. So while I'm a big believer in chain of command, I also believe that you have to give an individual public officeholder, in this case a legislator, their proper and due respect. You can't ignore people and you can't blow people off; therefore I would take meetings with legislators. Sometimes it was at the request of the legislative staff, Mark and his team; sometimes people would ask independently; sometimes people would go to the governor and they'd get sent back to me. In particular I dealt with both Pate and Lee, and Speaker Madigan, on a regular basis.

DePue: Were you, to a certain extent, a gatekeeper, a person that people had to go through first before they could get to the governor?

Reineke: Sometimes, yeah. But with Jim Edgar, the better way to describe it would be someone who was able to sit there and assess the situation and make a suggestion that it might make sense to talk to them, or it might make sense not to have the conversation at this point in time. So gatekeeper, maybe, but I wouldn't say it was from a totalitarian perspective; it wasn't an absolute: you had to go through Gene Reineke or you had to go through Jim Reilly or whoever in order to get to the governor. The governor has been around for a long time; he knows a lot of people. But on the other hand, you do need a bit of a filter. You couldn't have the door wide open, because nothing else would get done; that's not a particularly effective way to govern and try to run a state.

DePue: How about Al Grosboll? What was his position?

Reineke: Al was a policy guy, an executive assistant, and really was the point person on education issues, education reform, and environment. I knew Al from my lieutenant governor days, 1981, because I worked for the lieutenant governor and Al was the executive director of the Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council—which then became part of the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals, which became part of the Department of Natural Resources.³⁴ So I knew Al for years; Al was a personal friend of mine, a personal friend of my wife's. I know his wife, his son.

³⁴ Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, May 20, 2009, 3-12.

I will say about Al, and again, I say this with a smile on my face—Al had one of the messiest offices I've ever (laughs) seen in my life. I'm kind of a clean desk person. I remember walking in there—sometimes I felt like I had to look for a place to seat myself to have a conversation, because the piles of newspapers would be halfway to the ceiling. But I would say Al can be close to brilliant on issues because he loves to get into the details. On a personal level, he's got a wonderful sense of humor—loves to tell stories, loves to tell jokes. Can he be verbose at times? I guess you could say that. (laughs) But that said, one of the strengths and beauties of Al is, he'll get into the guts, the sausage-making with you. I think if anything, from my chief of staff perspective, I had to push Al along sometimes—let's Let's move over to this position here. But I have to tell you, whenever dealing with Al Grosboll, I had every confidence in him that he knew what he was talking about.

DePue: Was that sense that he was—

Reineke: He was a big government guy.

DePue: —in the details, he was into the process of making the sausage, one of the things that Edgar found appealing?

Reineke: Oh, I think so. I have to be honest with you. I have learned in my fifty-three years of life that while I can help make sausage, whether it's for a (laughs) client, which I'm doing now, or whether it's different assignments I had in government, I do prefer to be more in a leadership, managerial role and set strategic direction. Although I can get into the guts, probably too much so at times, because that fits my personality. But I don't necessarily love it, because coming away from a situation where you have to get so engrained in detail, not only are you exhausted, I sometimes think you don't have the proper perspective. Because you've lived so close to it, it becomes all-important, rather than taking a half-step back to say, Wait a second, this is what we should be doing, or this is what we achieve. So that is obviously just a little self-analysis there in terms of how I like to operate.

DePue: The next name on here is the lieutenant governor, and Lieutenant Governor Kustra had come very close just months before this to saying he wanted to be a radio announcer.

Reineke: Oh, at WLS. Yeah, that's right. Bob's a good guy. I always got along with Bob. I think it was children's issues he or his wife Kathy had an interest in, which I shared with my wife. But knew Bob and knew Kathy from when she was in government previously.

DePue: Let me set this up a little bit more. The lieutenant governor position in the state of Illinois has a very low public persona. I'm looking for the right words. It has no panache; it has very little power and—

Reineke: Not a whole lot to do?

DePue: —public regard. Yeah.

Reineke: Yeah, that's an issue. It's an issue that's been discussed publicly. As a matter of fact, our friend who we were just talking about, Mike Lawrence, has written about that maybe a month or so ago, six weeks ago, I forget. I see Mike's syndicated column when he sends them out. Yeah, that's a problem.

DePue: I guess the question is, did Edgar use Kustra effectively?

Reineke: I assumed that's where you were going. I think Jim Edgar had a very good personal relationship with Bob Kustra. I think he trusted Bob Kustra, I think he bounced ideas off of Bob, and I think he listened to Bob. It doesn't mean he and Bob agreed on everything; I'm sure they didn't. On the other hand, I have to then go back and look at Jim Thompson with Dave O'Neal, or later, Jim Thompson with George Ryan. While I think Jim Thompson and George Ryan had a better relationship than Jim Thompson and Dave O'Neal, the fundamental issue is: it's that office. It's not like Indiana or other states where you may be in charge of economic development or you have specific statutory duties.

The parallel with the president and vice president is very, very good. You can look at the Bush–Cheney model, and one could say, “Whoa, that's too much power for a vice president”; or you could look at Clinton and Gore, who maybe was a better model; or you can look at other situations, like JFK and LBJ, where it was done for political reasons and there was personal animosity, and who knows what was accomplished or not accomplished. But back to your fundamental question: it's not an issue of Jim Edgar and Bob Kustra as much as—if you remove the individuals—it's the nature of that office. There is nothing assigned to it, for the most part, so it has to be dependent on what the governor feels the lieutenant governor can do. On a personal level, I thought they got along very, very well.

DePue: I've gone through quite a few names; you've brought out quite a few more. Who else do we need to mention here from your perspective as chief of staff that you dealt with pretty closely?

Reineke: Joan Walters. Joan was the budget director; loved Joan. Joan is another—and I feel like I'm going all over the page here—but it's the kind of personalities Jim Edgar attracted. There are a lot of nontraditional, non-Republican types of individuals that he surrounded his inner circle with. I think that offered him a lot of value in terms of the perspective and the intellect and the ideas that come from that diverse group of people, which enabled him, frankly, to come up with better solutions because he'd hear all sides. Joan is a very independent-minded thinker. Joan probably had some challenges with the legislative leadership at different times, but frankly, that's to be expected; that's one tough job.

DePue: Much tougher the first four years.

Reineke: Yeah, because of the financial hole that the state was in and the deficit and the challenges of where we were going to make cuts. Joan is someone who has a very good heart. And I don't mean to get too personal here, but I think her instincts toward doing the right thing from a human perspective, not just a bottom-line, bean-counter perspective, is a tremendous attribute. I think the governor appreciated that he had someone with Joan who... I think Joan was his chief of staff in the secretary of state's office, if I'm not mistaken, at one time.³⁵

DePue: Yes.

Reineke: My memory gets more challenged every day as I get older. I think Joan brought that perspective, so the governor would not feel from her that, I have to make a decision based purely on the numbers; I'm making a decision based on the implication of those decisions regarding the numbers. I think Joan was a delightful person to work with. I think I learned a lot in terms of the nuances associated with state government budgeting.

DePue: Did you have many dealings with Mrs. Edgar?

Reineke: With Brenda? Yeah. Brenda and I, and my wife and the governor, I've mentioned previously, had all gotten involved with the whole Baby Richard situation earlier. We, on a personal level—"we" being my wife and I, just because we had adopted children—felt a connection there. But Brenda's interest in child welfare and a lot of associated issues helped create a real natural bond for us early on. Brenda's a very nice, intelligent person, and in my view, she was the governor's closest confidant in terms of whose opinion perhaps mattered the most, when all is said and done.

DePue: Let's talk about the governor himself, then. How would you describe his leadership style and his management style?

Reineke: I would get to see them all, whether it was a briefing or an agenda for a meeting that was going to happen, and the governor never failed—and this is a bit of a generalization—to ask the questions that people oftentimes had failed to think of when we would do a meeting. I would sit in on a lot of meetings with other staff or sometimes people from the outside who came in. For example, if there was an issue we were trying to describe and there were particular facts stated, the governor was able to hone in on particular details that were not necessarily always addressed; the staff would have to go back and provide additional information. That's more of a tactical view or tactical observation.

I think the real issue is he understood the political implications in addition to the policy implications but was able to get to, "What's the real bottom line here" that we're trying to decide, or what's the real bottom line to an issue. Jim Edgar

³⁵ Walters served as assistant secretary of state from 1981 to 1984. Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 15, 2009, 61-84.

knew state government, I'd say, better than (laughs) just about anybody that I've ever run into, because he loved it, he enjoyed it. While he may not have felt it at times, being governor, in my opinion, was really not just the apex of his public service career but was his dream job. I think that's where he always wanted to be.

DePue: So in the vernacular, was he a policy wonk?

Reineke: He was more of a policy wonk than a politician. I think he learned to be a good politician. He was obviously—and it's still true today—a very popular politician. I don't know if you caught the *New York Times* last Sunday. There's an article about Jim Edgar in terms of Republican governors who won. It's in section one. It's very positive on him. So I think he enjoyed it [being governor]. He was less like a Bill Clinton, who was a policy wonk but also enjoyed the political side. I think Jim Edgar tipped more towards the policy side because he understood the implications of what you can do when you're a governor or a senior public official. But I don't think he was so wonkish that—that was my point about he understood the political implications of a decision—that became the sole reason for taking a particular position only; I think it was the priority he placed on what are the policy implications of whatever had to be decided.

DePue: Was he or could he be a tough taskmaster?

Reineke: Yeah, because he was so into the details. I know I had my moments of eyeball-rolling when I'd leave the office. (laughter)

DePue: Did people dread going into meetings with him?

Reineke: No, no. I don't know why anyone would dread that because you have an opportunity to go see the governor. It doesn't mean he wouldn't get annoyed with somebody. That happens. That happens here, down the hall, in the private sector. (laughs) But it's fun. You're lucky to have that ability to influence in a small way the process about a particular issue. So if anything, I'd go so far and say there were hurt feelings sometimes if someone wasn't invited into a meeting, but the governor was always pretty good about that. He didn't necessarily want a mob scene, but he wanted all the appropriate voices around the table when we had to resolve issues. He was very good about that.

DePue: On the flip side, would there be any aspects of his leadership style or personality you might have wished he was a little bit better on?

Reineke: It didn't bother me, because that's just how I am, but I will say there were a lot of people that felt he was too standoffish, too aloof, a little bit too cold at times. I don't think that was his intent; I think it was the intensity of what he was dealing with. He wasn't naturally going to be jovial and kidding and joking around. I'll tell you an observation of him right now—I've had it said to me if once, a hundred times. While I think all governors go through a period of adjustment back to the reality of not being the top person in the state, when he left office, people would say to me over and over, "My gosh, he seems so different than when he

was governor,” in terms of how loose he was and laughing and kidding. I think that’s in part a reflection of—he wasn’t in the hot seat any longer. I also think that when you go through a certain amount of experiences in life and get older, most people at least loosen up a little bit because you have a healthier view on things. I think the fact that he was able to be half a step away from that gave him the freedom to really be his more natural self.

But back to your fundamental question: was he going to slap somebody on the back, and people are going to walk out of his office and in general feel like, boy, that was a lot of fun? No, it just depends on the individual meeting or circumstance or the situation. But I think if anyone had a reason to critique him, where they felt, gee, I wish he would have been a little bit different, it would be on the so-called warm-fuzzy quotient. He wasn’t that kind of person.

DePue: Maybe this is another aspect of that personality that you’re talking about, but Al Grosboll suggests that he wasn’t very good at giving positive reinforcement, letting people know they were doing a good job.³⁶

Reineke: Hard for me to answer that one. I don’t need that, so I never really saw it. Yeah, you know what, Al worked for Jim Edgar longer than I did, so Al may have a broader experience. That said, I don’t think he was actually going to say, “Great, you’ve done a magnificent job,” because the reality is nothing is ever over in government or politics; there’s always a next step, a next stage, what happens next. But I never felt that. I never felt that, Oh boy... Now I had my moments where I would get mad at the governor. I’m sure he had his moments where he probably got either mad or annoyed with me or at me.

DePue: Do you remember any particular?

Reineke: I do, actually. I remember—(laughs) I do. But that said, when people calm down and people cool off a bit, you kind of go, Okay, what do we need to do in this situation? I remember a couple things. I got mad—I don’t think I’ve ever told him this; I think he may know the other one. I remember one morning—it was Saturday morning and I was in Petersburg, Illinois, where I used to live, outside of Springfield—there was a *Springfield State Journal-Register* headline. I can’t even remember what the issue was, but it was the headline of the Saturday paper. So I was at the drugstore or whatever, looking at it, and my little—I think we had pagers back then—went off. It was the governor and he was all upset because, I don’t know, Pate had done something or said something, it was on the front page of the paper, and it was contrary to what our position was. He got all exercised about it, and I just kind of went (sighs). I rolled my eyes, but in turn that got me exercised, like, now I have to deal with this on a Saturday morning; I can’t really control what Pate said or did. (laughs) And like I told you, that’s what I remember. I don’t even remember the particular issue. I guess I could go find it in

³⁶ Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009, 49-50.

the front pages of the Saturday *State Journal-Register* archives. Silly things like that.

I used to eat lunch with him a lot of occasions because our offices were just across the different sides of the governor's office—not the rotunda, but the reception area. I remember one time his assistant, Sherry Struck, called me up; she buzzed me and said, "The governor wants you to come over and have lunch." I remember I was being petulant; I was being obnoxious, like, "I'm sorry, I don't want to have lunch today." I was mad about something silly; it was just goofy. Of course Sherry talked me off the ledge and said, "Come on, stop," and I said, "Okay, fine." I'm just saying, when you're in that kind of situation that's intense—with strong personalities, with real implications—and you have a lot of stuff going on, a lot of pressure, and you've got different kinds of interests to hopefully satisfy, the human element of one's personality can rise to the surface sometimes in a not-so-admirable way.

I remember one time the governor was looking for Pate and I couldn't find Pate. He was at a card game with Stan Weaver—this is after hours one night—and the governor kept calling me, "Did you find him yet? Did you find him yet?" I'm like, "No, I haven't found him." I finally found him and it got taken care of, but I remember I was getting quite worked up at the time that I couldn't find Pate. (DePue laughs) It was six or seven o'clock at night and he was gone, and no one knew where he was. He was over at Senator Weaver's house; they were playing cards or something like that.

DePue: Let's change gears here. It's not too far afield from what we've been talking about, and that was the inner workings, the relationships that make any staff work, or in some cases maybe the things that make staffs dysfunctional: reorganization of state government.

Reineke: Right.

DePue: That's a wonkish kind of thing to do, to improve the way state government works. So let's talk first about the Department of Natural Resources' creation.

Reineke: I think the best place to start really is—while it sounds wonkish because of the implications of having to reorganize government, a bureaucracy, or whatever you want to term it as, I think it fundamentally goes back to more of a Republican philosophy, which is streamlining government. How do you make it more effective from an organizational perspective? Are there synergies that can be achieved? The rap on government, as we all know, is it's too big—the whole Ronald Reagan philosophy. Or at least it was a philosophy; I don't know how true it is in hindsight in terms of actual implementation. Was government too big? Can you find ways to serve people better, to eliminate duplication, and to save money? I think that's, in part, the driver. So I think what you saw in the early part of the second term was this desire to see if you could combine some agencies—like Conservation and Mines and Minerals, Energy and Natural Resources, Water

Resources, DOT, et cetera—put them in a new agency, and could that actually work better and more effectively and more efficiently?

Remember, the nineties in a lot of ways represented a time of real significant change in this country, both at the federal level and particularly down at the state level—less so at the county or municipal level—where you had this desire to maybe do things a little bit differently. The whole welfare-to-work issue, the whole evolution of Bill Clinton as a traditional Democrat into a moderate centrist Democrat—forget the political rationale behind it—but to change how things were done. Welfare wasn't working in America; government was getting too big. So again, you had a general Republican philosophy of a smaller, more efficient way of doing things, and I think that was really the initial first experiment, to say, "Does this make sense?"

DePue: I know George Fleischli and Al Grosboll were two of the people who were right at the heart—Brent Manning from his natural resources side as well. Were you intimately involved in that, or did they manage that transition more?

Reineke: No, they managed the day-to-day details. I was intimately involved in terms of what was happening, what we were going to do, but in terms of saying, this particular division of this particular department—maybe that would be better reorganized over here. I don't mean to say that I wasn't interested in it—nor did I abdicate responsibility—but it really wasn't the chief of staff's job, who really needs to make sure the overall agenda is moving forward. That was a significant piece of it, but George and Al and Brent—smart guys; they knew what they were doing. So that wasn't as much of an issue.

I think it became a bigger issue later on, after the next set of midterm elections, when we got into the social services field, because I was an advocate of doing more consolidation. There was a lot of pushback—it came from the Republicans—that, ooh, too big of a bite. But I was really one of those—and I think Joan was as well—advocating that we should do more of that, because I liked the idea, personally, from a philosophical perspective, of consolidation. I think it makes for easier management—forgetting all the so-called benefits of duplication and cost savings, et cetera.

DePue: One of the agencies that was not incorporated into the new Department of Natural Resources was the Illinois EPA. Did you buy in on the rationale for not including that?

Reineke: Oh my gosh, now you're taxing my memory on that. Was it because of the federal relationship in terms of dollars and...

DePue: Because of the need to have EPA be an independent agency if they're to be an honest broker in this.

Reineke: Sort of what's happened just recently at the federal level in terms of the gulf oil spill, where you had the same agency granting permits and regulating.³⁷

DePue: Exactly.

Reineke: Which the Obama administration has changed. Yeah, I could understand that. That's just two different roles. Now, in terms of my particular position at the time, I can't honestly remember if I was a strong advocate or a strong opponent of the consolidation. I probably understood the intellectual reasoning behind not including it, but again, it wasn't something that... I was pleased that the governor chose to go down a conceptual path of reorganization for state government. That was my priority.

DePue: Let's move on to the next one. You've already alluded to it, and that's 1997 and the creation of the Department of Human Services. Can you flesh that one out a little bit more, and maybe start off with laying out the framework of that.

Reineke: Again, the thinking was, Can we be more efficient in terms of how services are administered to people? Can we eliminate duplication? Can we make it easier, for what is a very complicated system to administer, to give out social services; was there a better way to do it? I think because it was social services, you had a lot of interest groups that were particularly influential in terms of the political process. I think that's really where some of the opposition came from initially. With all due respect to the importance of the environment, natural resources, I think the fact that we were now dealing with something that involves human lives day to day—it took on a much more intense level of debate and discussion. I also think, with all respect to the agencies that became part of the Department of Natural Resources, at the end of the day it wasn't as if they had the same sort of, not only influence, but dollars associated with them, and that makes a big difference.

DePue: Let me just say the agencies that ended up in the Department of Human Services: Department of Rehab Services, Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, and the state's welfare system, but I believe not the Department of Public Aid.

Reineke: No, but pieces of Public Aid, pieces of public health. The core of that part of human services really was the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. So it had those three agencies that you mentioned, and it had pieces of another three or four agencies in there, and it still wound up being a very large creation called Department of Human Services. But it was a lot more controversial than the DNR consolidation.

³⁷ DePue is referring to the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS). Following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, MMS was renamed and reorganized by function into three divisions: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Natural Resources Revenue. Department of the Interior, Secretarial Order No. 3299, May 19, 2010.

DePue: What was the driving force, the rationale, for bringing these agencies together, then?

Reineke: If you were a citizen who needed services, more often than not you could have one-stop shopping, at least in theory. You would have to deal with less having to go here for this and go there for that and go here for this. Think about it. Think about the natural association with elements of public health but with someone that has an alcohol problem or an issue that may lead to a mental health issue—the interconnectivity—you can see it and why it makes sense, to be able to have someone in this phase of their need for services be able to move to this phase and move to some hopefully successful conclusion. That's the fundamental rationale behind it. Some of it was size, but I think even the Republican legislature felt that the reality was, "Guys, this is too big of a bite," which is why you still wound up with a very large department.

Again, I think on a personal level, I sort of fell in love with the concept of trying to do it again, because it demonstrated that the administration was not—obviously it wasn't—in a caretaker mode, saying, This is how government operates; we'll continue. It was to think differently, like, let's look at this from a different kind of perspective. I guess if you had to look back from a historical perspective, I have not seen much criticism once you got through the initial early years of blending and transitioning and getting it organized, which is a big, humongous task in and of itself. So I think both reorganizations and realignments were successful.

DePue: In both cases you think the state ended up saving money and finding efficiencies, improving services?

Reineke: That's a subjective question.

DePue: Staff cuts?

Reineke: Yeah. You mean, were there staff cuts over the long haul?

DePue: Because you brought several agencies together?

Reineke: Yeah, I think there were efficiencies—probably not as much as people would hope or thought there were going to be initially. But gosh, I'd have to go back and look at the numbers you have, look at how programs—a like-for-like comparison—what programs made up the department then versus now? I Particularly when you're in human service field, I think it's difficult to find cost efficiencies. I think, as I said: perhaps more academic than theoretical.

DePue: One major service agency wasn't incorporated, and that was Children and Family Services. You've already mentioned it was something you were close with, which Brenda and the governor himself had a very strong feeling for. Why not that one as well?

Reineke: Because of the sensitivities that were associated with it. DCFS, in and of itself—you're dealing with the part of society, children, that can least advocate or defend themselves. I think the last thing that you'd want to do is put the agency responsible into a larger situation where, while there's a lot of counseling, et cetera, a lot of it is administering different kinds of human services programs. Fundamentally, I just think there was such a priority on DCFS, and there were a lot of issues, as you recall. Jess McDonald did a fine job running a difficult, difficult agency. It was such a highly visible agency that the thinking was to not put it in a position where it could get subsumed in terms of attention. It was just that important and that much of a priority.

DePue: Another area of major reform was educational reform, and a lot of people would say this was the major emphasis for the Edgar administration in the second term. There are really two components to that. Edgar had run against Dawn Clark Netsch by being opposed to an income tax increase to fund education. Netsch was proposing an income tax increase and then a tradeoff with property taxes, which was a bone, if you will, to a lot of the suburban Republicans in the state. Let's start with that discussion in terms of Edgar's personal goals towards trying to improve education by trying to improve educational funding.

Reineke: I think you start at the big picture. Education, when all is said and done, was the governor's long-term priority during his eight years, whether it was K through 12, or whether it was higher ed at community college or four-year universities. So I think you had something that was very important to him, very complicated. The fact of the matter is, the issue is still not resolved today. I think the political reality was, Jim Edgar had the courage to suggest we needed certain things; we need to be able to pay more money towards our schools; we need to dedicate more of the increases in the budget each year to the schools and commit to them; we need to reorganize how schools are administered—hit some of the fundamental issues. Early on, we dealt with Chicago school reform in '95 with the mayor and his team.

DePue: Were you fairly deeply involved in the discussions with Chicago on their school reform?

Reineke: Yeah. I got to know a lot of the folks from the mayor's office in Chicago who were on his staff during that. But I think that was just a subset of the governor's overall commitment to reforming education in a lot of different areas around the state. I just think that was his biggest priority. If you go back to the income tax versus property tax swap, I think that was probably one of those telling moments for Jim Edgar in terms of public perception and media perception: that he would have the political courage and the political will to try to fundamentally change how education is funded in the state of Illinois, by including a minimum of state contributions per student. He acknowledged the reality that kids who went to poorer school districts, which didn't have the resources of suburban Chicago, for example, were not getting the same kind of quality education as they were in different parts of the state. So I think what he was trying to do on a very

humongous scale was bring about some equity in terms of the basic education that is provided to each student in the state of Illinois, and that's a—

DePue: And of course, Illinois is one of the states that provide a lower percentage from state tax dollars to fund education.

Reineke: Because it comes from the property taxes, right.

DePue: Because of the property taxes. But you said he had the political courage, and yet during the '94 election, he used that as a hammer to beat Dawn Clark Netsch, who was making the same recommendations.³⁸

Reineke: Yeah. I would argue that—we can go back and look at it—her priorities may have been more on raising the income tax than just doing a real equity change with property taxes; maybe that's just a matter of perception. I think that the appeal for Governor Edgar, in terms of lowering property taxes—remember the issue of caps early on, et cetera—that would have a greater appeal among suburban Republicans, and I'm not sure that that was necessarily emphasized as much as the income tax side of that equation was with Netsch.

DePue: You mean during the—

Reineke: During the campaign. It's maybe a bit of a nuance, but I think it was more about the flip under the Edgar model—to address the inequity with property taxes; with Comptroller Netsch's proposal, it was more to put the money in the income tax and not as much worry about the inequity issue.

DePue: Certainly that tax swap was part of what Netsch was saying, but was part of the response then, well, we're talking about a woman, a self-described liberal Democrat—of course she's going to be tax-and-spend. I'm getting back to the campaign, and maybe I'm being unfair in this respect, but...

Reineke: No. Look, to cut through everything: we can argue over the semantics of it and what was emphasized and what wasn't, but there's the reality of a campaign, and the reality of a campaign is, how do you win so you can achieve your agenda? If you want to emphasize that your opponent has a particular position, [such as] increasing your income tax, and after you win, you articulate and lay out a program that is a legitimate transformation—which may show similarities, to a lot of people, with what your opponent argued for—that happens. It happens all the time in government and politics. I remember the same thing with Jim Thompson, frankly, in 1982–1983 with no tax increase, and we had a little tax increase.

³⁸ For discussion of this question by other administration officials, see Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 11, 2009, 43-45; Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 28-30; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 20-21 and 33; Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 3, 2009, 46. Netsch's plan drew comparisons to an earlier proposal Edgar had developed as a legislator; see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 24-30.

DePue: One of the things that Edgar did early on after he won reelection was figure out a way to study this, and maybe this was part of the strategy.

Reineke: The Ikenberry Commission?

DePue: The Ikenberry Commission. Were you involved in discussions to set up the Ikenberry Commission? We're talking about Stanley Ikenberry, who was... Was he still the president of University of Illinois at that time?

Reineke: Or was Jim Stukel in at that time? So what year was that?

DePue: Nineteen ninety-five.

Reineke: Ninety-five, and Jim was in for a long time. I think Ikenberry may have been retired.

DePue: That's what I recall, I'm just not sure on that.

Reineke: Yeah, I think Stan was retired because Jim was in for a long time as president.

DePue: But the basic question is, how did that commission come about? Was there a discussion, and were you involved in that discussion?

Reineke: Just to know who's going to be on there in terms of recommendations and other names, but it wasn't my primary responsibility to come up with the names and recommendations of who's going to sit on a commission. At the end of the day, the governor knew what he was going to charge the commission with, and I would suggest that he had a pretty decent idea (laughs) of what the commission might suggest or recommend; therefore, that probably had some effect on who was put on the commission.

DePue: The idea of the commission itself—was that the governor's concept from the beginning?

Reineke: Yeah, if I recall correctly, yeah. I don't know if someone had suggested it to him separately.

DePue: So are you suggesting that the establishment of the commission was just to give cover, if you will, for the end results that you believed they were going to reach in the—

Reineke: No, I don't think it was just for that, but it helped legitimize it. I don't think there was any directive given that "You must come up with this solution." Do I think a lot of very well-informed, smart people who happen to know each other and respect one another and have particular points of view, share those views; the potential solutions were limited. No, it's not as if this issue was brand new. The issue was, as we've talked about: everybody knows Illinois' property tax is out of control in parts of the state, ridiculously high. What's a possible solution? So it

wasn't as if there were a hundred different—there are maybe a hundred different variables that could go into in an equation, but an income/property tax-swap concept wasn't addressed in the campaign. So it's not like this is brand new area that we're covering here.

Again, I just want to be real clear. No, I don't think there was any directive: "This is what you must come up with." I think there was a sense of: come up with something, knowing that there would be an appetite for the governor to find it acceptable. But the political reality is, whenever you have a task force or a commission study an issue, whatever it is, at whatever level of government, there's a certain amount of window dressing that comes along with that. It legitimizes it; it makes it acceptable that it's not just a politician's point of view, but a larger, more diverse group that's reflective of the state, in this case the state as a whole, that's endorsing a particular concept.

DePue: Was the mission or the charter of the commission then as simple as this: that the commission needed to find ways to increase the amount of state funding for Illinois schoolchildren?

Reineke: Yeah, fundamentally, per student on an individual basis, and how do you do that? And the solution of whether it's an income tax or other taxes as possibilities—at the end of the day, how do you get more money?

DePue: As soon as that is established, at the same time there is this whole issue of Chicago school reform; the issue is a little bit different, as I recall. You can contradict me if you need to, but my understanding is, it's an issue of the mayor and the city council don't really have control of the school board and therefore don't have control of spiraling school costs and expenses. So what's being looked at is to somehow, some way, give the mayor more authority over the school system.

Reineke: You had the Chicago Board of Education, you had local school councils, and you had a system that, when all is said and done, while they mayor may bear the political burden or perceptual responsibility for the schools, administratively he did not have mechanical control over that. It was fairly well known that Chicago schools on a national basis were not in a very good place. I think that was actually a very positive development of the Daley administration working with the Edgar administration, to try to change things without taking in political views or positions. In other words, it was really about, what do we need to do to fix Chicago's schools? How do you get that hammered out? I also think it coincided very closely with a Republican legislative agenda as well, because you had a mayor that... I mean, Mayor Daley is a very practical politician and it was about getting something done, not about who loses power or who gains power.

DePue: Did this require legislation at the state level to fix?

Reineke: Yeah, I believe it did. Yeah.

DePue: So did you have this peculiar alliance between Mayor Daley, who wanted to get more power, and Republicans in the House and Senate who were willing to give him more power?

Reineke: You used the word “peculiar.” I wouldn’t say it was peculiar as much as it was practical, because their objectives aligned with one another. At the end of the day, the typical Republican position has always been, big, bad city; everything the city wants is a bad thing. The city said, Everything the suburbs or downstate wants, that’s a bad thing. You just had this fundamental recognition that something had to be done about the Chicago schools, so the stars happened to align on that, everything from... Were there differences over how many charter schools, and all that stuff, later on, et cetera? Yeah, but I think the fundamental issue of going from a board of education not controlled by the mayor of Chicago, to a very small group of his appointments, of his team—that was very significant. Mary Sue Barrett was involved a lot. Mary Sue’s over at Metropolitan Planning Council right now. Susan Sher, who was in the legal office, who’s in the White House right now—I think Susan was involved. I’m trying to remember. Was Roger Kiley the chief of staff at the time? Roger may have been.

DePue: Chief of staff for...

Reineke: The mayor. I think Roger may have been. He’s a good guy. Who else?

DePue: The name that really came out—it was after the legislation passed, and now instead of a superintendent you’ve got a chief executive officer—would have been Paul Vallas, who had been the budget director. So he’s not even a person who’s an educator, who Mayor Daley appointed to reform the school system.

Reineke: Uh-huh. Yeah. Obviously, Paul’s a key player, good guy—deserved a lot of credit.

DePue: Were you heavily involved in those discussions?

Reineke: Yeah, to a degree, but in terms of running point about who’s going to sit in the room till midnight arguing over the language, no; that’s not what my role was. My role was the next morning: Okay, what have we agreed to? Okay, now let’s go back to the principals, the governor and the mayor, see what they think. Because you can do [the former]; if you’re going to do it at that level on everything, it’s going to be...(pause) There’s not enough time to do that, is the reality. That’s why you have a hundred people sitting in the governor’s office.

DePue: March 1996, the Ikenberry Commission comes in and issues its report recommending changes. In part, it’s 1.5 billion dollars in property tax relief and 400 million dollars in new state educational funding. That’s their recommendation. Of course, the discussion kind of starts from there. Do you recall when the commission report came out? I’m kind of putting you on the spot here, I know.

Reineke: Yeah, I do recall it. But particulars about what the reaction was immediately or who took what position on it—who's for it or against it—gosh, I can't remember that level of detail.

DePue: March '96 leads into a midterm election, at least for the governor, and at the end of that midterm election it's clear that once again the Illinois legislature is split. It was Republican in both House and Senate for two years, and now it goes back to Madigan as Speaker of the House, as you mentioned before.

Reineke: Yeah, but remember, too—1996 was an election year, so there's a certain acknowledgement about Springfield, which is when you're in election years—'94, '96, whatever—a lot less gets done besides the budget and a few other things; that's the mentality. So because the Ikenberry Commission report came out, I don't think necessarily, regardless of what it said from a public positioning perspective, there was a strong belief that anything would absolutely happen. It doesn't mean we didn't try, but educational funding reform wouldn't necessarily be easy or happen in a midterm election year.

DePue: Since it's an election year, and that's a presidential—

Reineke: A presidential nomination, yeah.

DePue: Did you get an opportunity to go to that national convention?

Reineke: Yeah; that was San Diego, I think?

DePue: You recall anything specific about that?

Reineke: Yeah, I recall that the Republican Party was going to nominate the next in line, Sen. Bob Dole, the majority leader, and I remember—

DePue: It was San Diego.

Reineke: Yeah, it's a lovely city, very nice place.

DePue: And Jack Kemp as the vice presidential candidate.

Reineke: Yeah, I do remember that. But I remember from a political point of view, I don't think the expectation—maybe I'm wrong—was that that was necessarily going to be a very successful ticket. Clinton really made his comeback after his disastrous midterms in '94. I think Bob Dole may have been viewed as moderate-conservative, but I think when all was said and done it was kind of like John McCain: there's a generational issue. And if I recall, the economy may have been pumping along pretty nicely at the time, which—

DePue: It was.

Reineke: Which was going to serve the benefit of the incumbent.

DePue: One other thing for 1996: wasn't that the governor's fiftieth birthday year?

Reineke: Gosh, I guess so, but (laughs) I didn't remember that either.

DePue: The only reason I mention it is because I believe Joan Walters got dressed up as Marilyn Monroe.

Reineke: Marilyn Monroe, yeah. And you know what? I remember that, but I don't remember where it was, the party.

DePue: Let's get back to more substantive (laughs) things, then, if you will. January 1997, and the governor is still looking for ways to fund educational reform and actually dips into his own pocket—maybe this is his own campaign fund—and spends four hundred thousand dollars on an ad campaign.

Reineke: Yeah. I do remember that.

DePue: How did that decision come about?

Reineke: It was to try to influence legislators through grassroots, through the public; that the thinking would be, we need to do something. First of all, the objective is: how do you motivate individual legislators—who are beholden to legislative leaders for political/fundraising assistance—to perhaps act against what the leaders are suggesting they do? In other words, how do you get them to take a different position? The only thing that can supersede a leader is if a local legislator feels that his constituency feels strongly about a particular issue, because it's his or her head on the chopping block the next election day. If your base has problems or issues with you, or has a strong belief and you go against that belief, then that can be a problem for you personally. So you have to play to the personal motive.

How do you motivate the public in general? You've got to get the public to pay attention to issues. That's part of the problem—well, not part of the problem—the state's facing these days. There's a thirteen billion-dollar deficit in Illinois, there's unfunded pensions—do you think people can relate to this at all? I don't think so. So the thinking was, how do you do it? And the best way, at that time particularly, was you do it through television.

DePue: Nineteen ninety-seven, immediately after election, is the year to make it happen?

Reineke: Yeah, because the legislators were not up for reelection again in the House till 1998. I mean, that's the reality. (laughs)

DePue: Another allusion to the present day, when we're in an election year and it's just not likely to tackle a thirteen billion-dollar deficit challenge.

Reineke: No, I think this year they kind of made—I don't want to call it cosmetic—an initial first step towards how pensions are administered for state employees, new state employees, and then the issue of what happens to current state employees—

pensions and all that. You're not going to have anything... To Pat Quinn's credit, he's addressed the issue in terms of funding these, but you've got Senator Brady that's going to have other issues and taking more conservative—"We'll find ways to reduce the inefficiencies in state government." But we shall see. But your analogy between the '96-'97 timeframe and today's timeframe is very accurate.

DePue: So Edgar is willing to spend four hundred thousand dollars of his own money to push this through—

Reineke: Of his campaign fund money.

DePue: Of his campaign fund money, yeah.

Reineke: I wouldn't say it's his own money. I don't remember the number, to be honest with you, if it was four hundred thousand or whatever it was.

DePue: So let's go through the legislative landscape because that's the target for this ad campaign. In Illinois, that means the four tops, the four senior leaders. Where is he going to find allies, and where is he going to find opponents in those four tops?

Reineke: Oh, I see what you're saying. I would suggest that you had to look for allies within each of those four caucuses below the individual leaders. I think in a certain way, while you needed the support of Republicans, you may have had Democratic allies in those leaders who were more willing to consider serious education reform, as described by the governor, than you did at the end of the day with the Republicans of his own party. I think Pate and Lee were more of a challenge.

DePue: So let's break it down in here. Let's start with the Senate Republicans, led by James 'Pate' Philip, your classic DuPage County conservative, who on the surface would be in favor of a property tax cut.

Reineke: Sure, but not an income tax increase. At the end of the day, I'm not sure you were ever going to get Pate to be supportive of that. I'm not saying that he may not have had a willingness to do certain things, but fundamentally, from a more macro level, the fear of saying to your constituents, or said by your Democrat opponent in some of those targeted districts that could go either way, that you voted for an income tax increase—because that's something that was easily understood by people. I think that people didn't necessarily believe that there was going to be a swap. You can say it, but until people see it in their property taxes—and then you've got their assessments and how that plays into the equation—it's scary not so much from a philosophical perspective as it is in a practical perspective. I just don't think, in hindsight, you were ever going to get the original swap as proposed, you were ever going to be able to accomplish that with Republican leaders.

DePue: Something just occurred to me. The state legislature—correct me if I’m wrong, here—doesn’t directly affect the property tax rate for each one of the counties, does it?

Reineke: No, that’s right. So if you’re a citizen and you know you have a state income tax increase, where’s the guarantee that you’re actually going to see the lowering of your property taxes in exchange for paying more of a state income tax?

DePue: On the other side of the Senate you have Emil Jones and the Senate Democrats.

Reineke: Yeah, and remember, they’re in the minority at that time. There were a lot of nice individuals in there, important for a lot of different reasons, and when you looked at the four caucuses as an entity, in a certain way they were the least problematic. But they were probably the least influential in the process, to be very blunt about it, because they were a minority caucus. They didn’t have the majority. I just remember sitting in enough of those leaders’ meetings, and while they were a voice in the room, I don’t think they were the dominating voice.

DePue: On the other side, in the House, you have Mike Madigan, the Speaker of the House. Most people I talk to say he’s the most powerful legislator in the state—was then, is today. So tell me how the Democratic House would come down on this issue.

Reineke: I think they were more cooperative in theory than the House Republicans. On the other hand, from a political perspective, the House Democrats were not going to get out front and say, “Great, we’re completely supportive,” unless we saw some House Republican support as well.

DePue: Madigan is oftentimes described as a fiscal conservative. Was he, in particular, in favor of the swap or of the concept?

Reineke: I’d have to go back and give that some more thought, to honestly answer that. As best as I can recall right now, I don’t think he necessarily opposed it, but I don’t think he came out and said, this is a good idea; I’m in favor of it. But I think he was willing to talk about it more. The thing that’s interesting when you sit through those various leader meetings with the governor and their respective chiefs of staff: while you will get people supporting a particular position once in a while—or an absolute; we can’t do this or we will do this—more often than not it’s sort of about how they position themselves for the very end of session and the last chess moves being made. I will say, though, I think Speaker Madigan was not necessarily opposed to the idea, but I just cannot remember what he said publicly at that time, or even in private.

DePue: And Lee Daniels and the Republican caucus in the House.

Reineke: I think they were the most difficult of the four caucuses. The Senate Republicans in a lot of ways were too, but I think with the Senate Republicans, you could cut a deal. With the House Republicans, I don’t think you ever really knew where they

were coming from. There were people who were very friendly to the governor, like Tom Ryder from Jacksonville, who was a good fellow. You could have conversations with a lot of individual Republican members who may have had an open mind, but I think that Leader Daniels, at that point, was always a difficult breed in terms of what his real, final agenda was.

DePue: You mean you and the governor weren't sure what his agenda was or...

Reineke: How it would play out, in other words. Where could they wind up on a particular issue, be it educational reform or the budget or whatever. I think that was always a big challenge. I remember one time I went up to Speaker Madigan's office to talk to the Speaker; I was concerned about the budget agreement that supposedly had been reached, because the clock was ticking towards the midnight hour. If we passed the midnight hour, the number of votes would have to increase to get approval on—

DePue: From 50 to 60 percent?

Reineke: Right, on the legislation. My concern, to be very honest about it, was whether the House Republicans were going to stick to their agreement from earlier in the day, or whether they were going to see if they could wait until they had the ability to have more influence because we passed the midnight hour. I remember the Speaker kind of chuckled and felt that that was not going to be a problem.³⁹ The reason I mention that is because it goes to the heart of all of those conversations and negotiations on whatever issue: what really was the motivation [behind] where a leader and their respective caucuses would come out on an issue. In hindsight, I think we probably understood more upfront what the Senate Republicans would or wouldn't do. I think you could always talk to the Speaker and find room to have a conversation that could progress an issue. I think the Senate Democrats, being the minority that they were, had less of an influence, but I don't think were as problematic. I think the biggest challenge was always the House Republicans; because at the end of the day, I don't think the trust level was particularly high between the administration and the House Republican leadership—not all the leaders, but the leadership at the time.

DePue: I know that in 1997, Edgar ended up calling a special session for the legislature to specifically address the issue of educational reform and educational funding reform. Did that happen after the rest of the budget was put to bed?

Reineke: Yes, exactly. I don't want to say it became his legacy, but it was such a dominating issue, for him to achieve a significant amount of reform in educational funding in the state even though it wasn't the ideal objective that had been set out back after the '94 campaign. It's interesting, because for me, I think it was extremely significant. I think deep down, I personally felt a little disappointment

³⁹ On Madigan's ability to count votes, and Edgar's recognition of that ability, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 37-40.

that the fundamental core objective, which really changed the foundation of how education was funded for Illinois schoolchildren—I wouldn't say it was a partial loaf; it was a very significant loaf, but it wasn't the total original objective.

DePue: You mean there was never a quid pro quo where—

Reineke: He never did the swap. He never did the swap, at the end of the day. You found other taxes and you found more money and you found funding levels, in terms of states, for students and all that good stuff, but it didn't change the fundamental problem. For me, while it's a great achievement, it still is illustrative of the problem in politics, particularly in Illinois politics: let's just do what we can.

DePue: But to put some specifics on this, Edgar does sign landmark education reform legislation in December '97. Four hundred eighty-five million in new funds for education are found through various taxing schemes, so you now have a baseline of 4,225 from the state for each schoolchild, and it increases to 4,325 in 2000, and 4,425 in 2001. You have 1.5 billion for school construction. There are some other things in there about teacher certification and tenure reform; I believe the tenure reform was to maybe erode a little bit of the—

Reineke: The automatic.

DePue: —union's power, to extend the amount of time before somebody can get tenure. This is all funded by a cigarette tax—it's safe to find a sin tax—phone tax, riverboat casinos, and penalties for late filers—things like that.

Reineke: Right, and I'm not suggesting that everything you just mentioned wasn't good and great and real reform. It was, and it was significant. I'm just suggesting that at the end of the day, that's still not a fundamental change in addressing the core of the problem, which is the inequity of a system where the majority of education funding comes from property taxes. A fairer system would be driven by the state, because it's got a state perspective rather than a local real estate basis for funding significant parts of education. That's all. It's a great thing. I'm just saying I agree: in politics you take what you can get, and it's all good; it's something the administration should be very proud of. I'm just saying that it would have been nice, in my mind, if the problem had been addressed once and for all, rather than what could be a situation where funding education, when the state gets through its current financial challenges, will have to be addressed again because it doesn't go to the core of the problem.

DePue: You mentioned earlier that you believe this educational issue was the issue that Edgar in part was hanging his legacy on; this is something he wanted to definitely get accomplished. What do you think his gut feeling was once the legislation was signed?

Reineke: I think Jim Edgar's a practical enough politician that he appreciated you take what you can get in this situation, and that litany of things that were done for education were all good things—all necessary and all important. But I think you'd have to

ask him. If he was given the choice of his original objective in terms of the income/property tax swap or what was done and signed in December '97, pick one of the two, which would he have picked? I don't know. Personally, I would have preferred—in a perfect world—but we're talking about a political world, and you have to be practical. I'm being politically naïve, as I said earlier. As I get older, I find less room for compromise in things.

DePue: We haven't gotten that far in our discussions with Governor Edgar yet, but I'm sure we'll have lengthy discussions on the educational issue with him.

Reineke: Sure.

DePue: I don't know whether this is something that's worth bringing up with you, but I know another reform he was very proud about was adding to the state's resources in terms of land acquisitions, preserving state parks and national forests, and things like that.

Reineke: What was it, Site M, up in Cass County?

DePue: Site M, which is now called Jim Edgar Panther Creek [State Fish and Wildlife Area].

Reineke: Is that what it is? I just remember Panther Creek as the name of a golf course in Springfield, but (laughs) I have no idea where the real Panther Creek is.

DePue: But Site M was formerly Commonwealth Edison's. They were going to build a coal-fired power plant there; that fell through, and the state jumped at the chance. Was that something that he got passionate about?⁴⁰

Reineke: Yeah. I don't want to call him an environmentalist, but I do think he's someone who cares about the environment. Maybe he'd call himself that, I don't know, but I think he's an outdoors person. The fact that he likes to hike or ride horses or appreciate the outdoors, I think that's another personal priority that he was able to affect as governor. I think conservation was very important for him. So yeah.

DePue: I know that Manning and Grosboll got very involved with that, for obvious reasons. Was that something that took much of your time or attention?

Reineke: No, not a whole lot. Maybe I sound a little repetitious here. We had different point people that would tell us at different stages here's how it would go: a concept would get floated. Oh, well that's a good concept. And the concept would be discussed with the governor; the governor would give direction on it. Now, how do we make sure this keeps moving along? So my role as chief of staff, and others, is to make sure the concepts get advanced, the plan progresses. Okay? So in this case: Brent and Al, you guys go figure out what we need to do, come back

⁴⁰ For the acquisition of Site M, see Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 71-75, and Brent Manning, interview by Mark DePue, 24-28.

to us at the next stage in the process. That's basically how it works on most issues when you're the chief of staff. There are certain things you have to get involved in that are so important because they can change the entire perception of an administration, in my opinion. They don't necessarily rise to that level with every significant issue, from a legacy or a historical perspective, but they do happen; those are the issues that sometimes the chief of staff has to make sure are handled correctly and properly.

DePue: So for the Jim Edgar administration, in the years that you were there as chief of staff, what were those issues?

Reineke: I would argue it's the combination of everything we just talked about in terms of education. I would argue that the reprioritizations we talked about last time—economic development and the tax climate, and the continuing improvement in the fiscal health of the state—were all important. I would also argue that some of the state reorganization, from a conceptual perspective in terms of how state government was run more efficiently, was another area where you had to make sure, have we done what we said we were going to do and will be? Is it set up to be successful and not fail? That's all in the positive side of the ledger. Then you have the negative side of the ledger. You have to deal with a lot of issues out there; little things, like somebody screwing up in an administration, can often lead to a perception that the administration is incompetent. We saw that recently, I think—I don't know if it's necessarily permanent—with the Quinn administration, where they had the issue with the Department of Corrections: people getting released early, and how come the governor didn't know—

DePue: Criminals being released early—inmates, I should say.

Reineke: Inmates, right. So it's the kind of thing that creates a perception, because the thing with government is, it can be so complicated that most people either don't quite understand it or don't have the energy or the desire to follow it. What they can get is somebody doing something they shouldn't have done, because it's real simple to grasp and hold onto. That reflects on the person, he or she, that's in the top job.

DePue: That does bring us to the point of, on the negative side of the ledger, what most dominated the second half of his administration, and that would be the MSI scandal. Was that something that you got involved in? Just a short answer on that.

Reineke: Short answer on that? Boy, that's a tough one. How do you say "involved in"—was I—

DePue: Damage control.

Reineke: Was I aware of the significance of the potential problems associated with the MSI scandal? Yes, I definitely was. And did I understand the legal sensitivities associated with it and the perceptual exposure of the administration due to the MSI scandal? Yeah, very much so. I was very much aware of...

DePue: Before, you had mentioned that oftentimes your relations with Mike Lawrence were dealing with the crisis *du jour*. This is the crisis of the second administration. (laughs)

Reineke: The second term.

DePue: Let me just lay out some background here, and then we'll get more into the details. MSI stands for Management Services of Illinois. Ultimately, it's going to be an issue about some corruption because of significant overcharging that MSI is involved in with the state; you got money, you got politics, and you got government—you have potential for corruption. In July 1991, Department of Public Aid contracts with Management Services of Illinois to find people receiving Medicaid payments who also have private health insurance; in other words, they're bilking the government. It's a three-year contract, with MSI getting 19 percent of any payments they discover in this process. So it's a lucrative business; there's nothing wrong with that business, necessarily. They make 16.2 million in the first four years; most of that is at the very tail end of that timeframe between '91 and '95.

That gets us up to the election year, and MSI is one of the largest donors to the Edgar reelection campaign; the co-owners, Michael Martin and William Ladd, donate 31,650 dollars, and then lots of free computer services to the state as well. I don't know exactly when this surfaced.

Reineke: Not to the state—to the campaign, you mean.

DePue: To the campaign. Thank you, that's important. There's an MSI "lobster list" of people who received gifts of steaks, and I think some trips and some lobster, and things like that; the names include folks like Steve Schnorf, Senate president Pate Philip, Carter Hendren, Jim Owens, Mike Bass. Those were the kind of names around there. That's about the time, May 1995, that Mike Lawrence receives an anonymous letter saying, Why, there's something fishy going on over here at Public Aid that you need to be aware of. I wonder if you can pick it up from there.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Let's get started here and I'll pick it up again. So that is laying out the beginning of the MSI scandal; I'll let you pick it up from there and correct the record if you found anything that didn't sound right.

Reineke: Yeah, I just wanted to say—not that the figure was necessarily wrong—but I wanted to address the campaign contribution number; I think you said something like thirty-one thousand that was contributed by MSI's owners. You've got to realize—you put that in the context of how much money was spent and raised in a gubernatorial campaign; it's millions and millions of dollars. So while thirty-one thousand dollars is not an insignificant amount, in the bigger, overall picture it's not as if it's such a significant number that you sit back and say, Whoa, look at the size of that contribution. If I recall, there have been a number of hundred

thousand-dollar donations made; I think one in the Thompson years was the first one I recall like that. So again, I just want to frame it a little bit.

The second thing, which I know is a point we tried to make in the past: I didn't hear you say the particular dollar amount there on in-kind contributions of the computer services. The fallacy with that number is, that's self-reporting. In other words, I could be a private businessperson, make a donation to a campaign, and say, "I'm giving you these services and they're worth a hundred thousand dollars." There's no way to really check that. You can go to the private market and compare, but that's the problem. So tell us, campaign committee—whomever, X—what your services are that you've just donated. You give me a number, and that's what gets reported. So again, I just want to frame that because it's not necessarily, in my opinion, as sinister as you could make it, but then things obviously get caught up in a larger situation.

DePue: And on the subject of the lobster list of free steaks and lobster and trips, and things like that, according to the state statutes at that time, was there something specifically illegal about accepting those gifts?

Reineke: You know, I don't recall. I will say that (laughs) I wasn't on the gift list, and I didn't receive any of those steaks or lobsters.

DePue: I know there was legislation afterwards that tightened all of that up.

Reineke: Yeah, so it may have been an optical issue. There may have been some reporting; at a certain dollar value level you had to report a gift. I just don't recall specifically what the state law was at the time those gifts were given. But it's definitely an optical issue.

DePue: But again, now it brings us up to May 1995, and Mike Lawrence receives this anonymous letter. You've described Mike Lawrence as somebody who's very close to the governor, who kind of serves as the governor's conscience or sounding board in a lot of—

Reineke: Yeah, I agree with that. Mike turned it over to the state police, and it was the right thing to do. Now obviously it led to a much broader issue that wound up with people having to testify at trials, and a number of people going to jail.

DePue: Part of the ultimate issue was MSI received a serious overpayment. They were exceeding the amount they should have been getting paid, and that involved relations with Public Aid. But here's the question that always comes up in American politics since Watergate: how much did the governor know and when did he know it? Was he directly involved?

Reineke: No, no. There's no reason that I had ever thought that Jim Edgar knew or was directly involved in anything. First of all, I think the issue had to be over a renegotiated contract. I don't know whether it was an extension or it was a brand new contract, but I think that was part of the issue: a renegotiation over

reimbursement rates. I think that was part of the problem, number one. Number two, back to the specifics, whether the governor knew. Do I think the governor was aware? He had dinner with these guys in Chicago once, it was discussed publicly. Did he know they were campaign contributors? Yeah. I have no idea whether he actually knew—because I didn't have that discussion with him—that they had a contract or was the contract renegotiated, or any of those details. It's to the point that that level of detail—I would be shocked if most officeholders know that. One could argue there are exceptions, that people do understand that. I just finished a book, I told you last time, about the governor of Alabama, Don Siegelman, by a reporter, and there were issues that he may have known some details about things. But fundamentally, there are so many contracts in state government, there is no way, in my opinion, that Jim Edgar was aware of any of the specifics at all.

DePue: You mentioned already that what Lawrence did when he got this anonymous letter was turn it over to the state police. Why did he take that action, and do you think he told the governor at that time that's what he was doing? Do you know that?

Reineke: I don't know if Mike told anybody. He didn't tell me he was doing it, and so I don't know if he told the governor or not. Mike may have just turned it over because it was the right thing to do: let the chips fall where they may, and the state police investigates it. When you take a step back and you look at it, if Mike hadn't done that, then whoever wrote that letter may have sent the letter to a newspaper or sent it to someone else. The point is, it was the right thing to do; the consequences were what they were. I know it's not the first time that issues have come up that you have to just put in law enforcement's lap and let them address the issues and see where it leads.

DePue: Having done that, a little over a year later, August 1996, the federal grand jury indicts Mike Martin and William Ladd of MSI, and Ron Lowder and Curtis Fleming, both of the Department of Public Aid, in this whole thing. It comes out several months later—perhaps the most damning thing in terms of reflecting on the governor and the administration itself—there is some kind of tape that surfaces where Mike Martin of MSI is heard to say, “The governor is culpable in this thing, and a staffer tried to shake us down for some free stuff.” One of those recorded messages. I just realized we're in the midst of the beginning of the (laughs) trial for Rod Blagojevich, where they've got hundreds and hundreds of hours to do.

Reineke: Maybe we should have done this yesterday to (DePue laughs) commemorate the beginning of the trial.

DePue: I'm sorry for that distraction there.

Reineke: That's okay.

DePue: But do you recall that specific instance—

Reineke: No.

DePue: —because I'm sure it would have been garnering both your and Lawrence's attention at that time.

Reineke: Yeah, but I don't remember the specific tape that was played that he said somebody... Frankly, my opinion was, I would take whatever Mike Martin said—perhaps with a grain of salt, is the best way I could describe things. Here's what I think. Let me take a half-step off of this for a second. I think you have people like the owners of MSI, and I think you have people like Chris Kelly in the Blagojevich situation—unfortunate victim of his own hand; you have people who get involved and want to play in politics, and they think because they give money, perhaps services, that therefore they're entitled to some sort of extra attention. You mentioned the Blagojevich case. I would say a Stuart Levine is that kind of an individual, where they get some sort of thrill or excitement about being that close to the center of power or the seat of power. That kind of quote heard on a tape says to me that is bravado, it's bragging, and frank fact of the matter, maybe a little—to put it crudely—ass-covering for whatever his motivation was at the time.

DePue: The administration's response—and it was Tom Hardy by this time who was the press secretary—

Reineke: Tom was the lucky winner at that. (laughs)

DePue: He comes out and vociferously denies the allegations.

Reineke: Yeah. Well, what were the allegations? The governor's culpable, you said?

DePue: Yeah.

Reineke: And whatever it was... I could say anything. I could say I know stuff about President Obama, or I know... You know, it's crazy. So he said it. My reaction would be: Prove it. Where? Why? What makes you... I mean, if I was an attorney questioning him for that.

DePue: Was there anything about the governor's personality that would make you think that he would be susceptible to what you were describing before: classic politics that's been going on since the beginning of politics. You get involved in the campaigns, you give people money, and you expect some kind of quid pro quo on this thing.

Reineke: Or access.

DePue: Or access, yeah.

Reineke: Access is probably more appropriate now, rather than quid pro quo.

DePue: Was there anything about Jim Edgar that would make you think he would be susceptible to that kind of thing?

Reineke: No, no, because he's such a straight shooter. At the end of the day, I have to tell you, I don't think it was a particularly fun time for him to go out and have dinner with people who in some cases may have contributed money or services to a campaign. I'm not saying he doesn't enjoy the company of certain individuals, but he was not exactly someone who lived to socialize. I think he'd be just as happy riding his horse, at home with his dog, with his family, whatever. So the fact that Mike Martin, in this case, made an allegation like that, I take with a grain of salt and say that it's ridiculous.

DePue: Do you think he suffered some serious political damage during this long process of the MSI investigation and the trial?

Reineke: No, because here's why: It's a long time ago now, but if you look at his approval ratings after he left the governor's office, I think that while this is an important historical part of the history of the administration, I think it is a blip in the overall history of what Jim Edgar was able to do as governor. I also think, having lived in Springfield and Chicago and Washington, DC, and a whole bunch of other places around the country, that this was a Springfield story for a long while because Springfield is the state capital. Not to diminish the importance of what was done, or the illegality and how significantly wrong it was, but it took a while for this story to move up to Chicago. Not to say that it was helpful—because obviously it was not helpful; it was problematic—but I don't think that it had any permanent damage to his reputation or his legacy. I would have to go back and look at any polls that were done at that time, but I don't have a remembrance of thinking, Oh my gosh, this is going to be the end of the administration.

But like I said earlier, Mark, when you're in the center of the storm, you sort of forget that people are worried about their lives and their jobs, and are their roads and schools adequate, et cetera. Again, I'm not ignoring. I'm just saying, when you put it in perspective, I think it's so much of an inside state government-focused story, which dripped over into Chicago—particularly because the governor had testified at the trial. Reporters like my friend—a reporter at the time; he's head of the BGA now—Andy Shaw, got interested in it.⁴¹ The fact that it offered political ammunition to opponents of the administration at times... They're all headaches that you have to deal with, but I don't think on a permanent basis. You could go to nine out of ten people in Illinois, or you could go to ninety-five out of a hundred, and I would bet you most of them would say to you today—again, time has passed—“What's MSI?” That's my perspective.

DePue: Were you or the governor the kind of people who would watch the polls closely?

⁴¹ Better Government Association.

Reineke: You didn't poll all that much if you were not in an election cycle. So I would say no, not really.

DePue: I don't know the specifics, but I know he ended his administration in '98. The last two or three years, much of the press—you mentioned in Springfield, at least—had focused a lot of attention on this, but his poll numbers were rock solid.

Reineke: Yeah. See, that's why I keep arguing. In a lot of ways, it's like an inside baseball story, even in Springfield, but because of state government and because you have essentially one newspaper, one—I don't want to say one media outlet because you've got the radio station. I forget the call letters for the NPR station down in Springfield.

DePue: WUIS.

Reineke: WUIS. So you had WUIS. WMAY may have done some stuff—that was the talk radio that I remember—but the point was you had a very small world, this was a big story in a small world, and then when you blow it up to the rest of the state of Illinois, it diminishes in terms of its importance.

DePue: Well, I hate to be jaded about this, but (laughs) it's a Chicago market where corruption is a fact of life. Did it play differently in the Chicago market because of the heritage that Chicago politics had?

Reineke: Yeah. I'd have to go back and look, but I got to tell you, I can't remember all that many front-page stories in the *Tribune* or the *Sun-Times*. I'm sure there were some. Do I think there were any blaring banner headlines on this thing? No. Maybe there was at the trial or something. I don't recall any. So it's a bigger fishbowl, that's all. I'm not making excuses for it, I'm just saying, I'm sitting down in Springfield, and I'm the chief of staff—so yeah, this is a big pain in the rear end to have to deal with and acknowledge, because you've got media calling about it all the time, you have a trial going on, you've got state officials involved in it, and you have the governor and other staff having to testify. So it's a pain. I remember poor Tom Hardy. Tom's a good friend of mine. Tom would come in Friday afternoons, like Mike, between 3:00 and 5:00, and, "Oh, we just got a call on..." More often than not, during a certain period it had something to do with this unpleasant issue.⁴²

DePue: This might be an awkward transition, but the next thing that I want to talk with you about—I think you were still chief of staff at the time—is when Edgar was making the decision whether or not he wants to retire. That's an awkward transition because you automatically think, oh, this has something to do with MSI. Walk us through the process that the governor and the staff went through in trying to decide what to do in the next step of his life.

⁴² Tom Hardy was the *Chicago Tribune*'s political writer and succeeded Mike Lawrence as Edgar's press secretary in 1997.

Reineke: Let me just start with the MSI issue. It annoyed me that people would make that jump, that, “Oh, there’s a correlation between his decision and what happened with MSI,” particularly when the fact of the matter is: at the end of the day, when the verdict came down on a fellow named Jim Berger—the Public Aid employee who signed the contract and was on trial—he was found innocent. Regardless of before the sentencing, Mike Martin’s making all these allegations and charges, et cetera—that was really the end of it. It kind of just—I don’t want to say petered out—but it got off the front pages; it was really no longer a story. That sort of was the tripwire, with that verdict.

DePue: That was January 1998 when that occurred, when he [James Berger] was acquitted of all charges.⁴³

Reineke: Was that January of ’98?

DePue: January of ’98, yeah.

Reineke: Then I got my timing mixed up. But my point was, go back to the reference that you made to the polls. If you looked at the polls at the time, if he was trying to make a decision and the polls were bad... But if the polls weren’t bad, then how did MSI affect the decision-making process? My bottom line is this: I don’t think MSI was part of the decision-making process. I think you had to be aware of what everyone just went through with it, but I don’t think it was significant enough that it played into, What’s my future going to be? So I think that process began in terms of him making the decision as to what he’s going to do or not. You really had three big options out there, as far as I was concerned: run for a third term as governor, run for the United States Senate, or retire from government.

DePue: I’m trying to determine exactly when this discussion occurred, and I’m thinking it was in the summer of ’97.

Reineke: Yeah, it was right before that. It was June or July, after the legislative session. He didn’t focus on it until after the legislative session, if I recall. Then he announced in August of ’97 what he was going to do.

DePue: Where did you come down on those three options?⁴⁴

Reineke: Run for U.S. Senate. I thought he still had national potential; I thought he had a strong interest in international affairs, intellectually; I think he was tired of

⁴³ The Management Services of Illinois (MSI) scandal was a regular story line in Illinois papers throughout the summer of 1997, and into early 1998 when Jim Berger was acquitted of all charges. On August 16th, 1997 a federal jury convicted MSI co-founder Michael Martin, and Ronald Lowder, a state worker in the Department of Public Aid, on multiple counts, including fraud and bribery charges.

⁴⁴ For other perspectives on Edgar’s thinking about his course of action after his second term, see Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, November 6, 2009, 44-46; Walters, interview by Mark DePue, August 13, 2009, 31-32; and Lawrence, July 3, 2009, 2-12.

dealing with the frustrations of the political environment after eight years in Springfield as governor—that was my view. I did not think that was a good option, to run for governor again. I definitely was strongly in the camp of U.S. Senate because it was a different world; it was a bigger world, in my opinion. Not necessarily a more significant position, U.S. senator versus governor of a major state, but I thought it offered personal growth, intellectually and from a career perspective.

DePue: What was the downside of running for reelection as governor, from your perspective?

Reineke: What else did you want to achieve, if you step back and think about it? The economy was in good shape. Whether or not it was everything that you wanted on education, as we discussed, it was still significant education reform to the state. As we said, from a conservation perspective, there were a lot of positive landmarks. And from a financial, fiscal health of Illinois—you went from this deficit that he inherited to money in the bank. So what else would you do at that point? I also think that there is an element of—any of us—do you stay around too long? Is it time for some fresh blood, for some new thinking?

DePue: But you said you're strongly in favor of him going to the Senate. Then why not retire; why didn't you see that as the right decision for him?

Reineke: Retire? Oh, because I thought he was still a young man.

DePue: That's '97; he would have been fifty-one years old at the time.

Reineke: I mean, I'm two years older than that now. (laughter) I'd like to retire, but... I just didn't see that. What would you do? Obviously, he works at U of I, he's on some boards, does what he chooses to do in terms of a speech or a lecture, spends time with the horses—all that stuff, his personal interests. And that's great. That's a very personal decision. I come at it maybe from a staff perspective or a political perspective, which is: you have two political offices out there which I think are two great options. One was stronger for me than the other in terms of what I thought was best for him.

DePue: Any question in your mind if he had run for the Senate in that year—I guess that would have been '98—that he would have been successful?

Reineke: Who was the nominee? Was it Fitzgerald?

DePue: Fitzgerald.

Reineke: It was Peter, and Peter beat Carol Moseley Braun, didn't he?

DePue: Yes. And then six years after that—

Reineke: Obama.

DePue: —he steps down and Obama wins that seat.

Reineke: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah. So would the history get changed?

DePue: It's one of those questions, isn't it?

Reineke: Yeah, it is. It is interesting. It is interesting. But again, it's his decision and Brenda's decision at the end of the day.

DePue: How much do you think his health factored into that, and Brenda's preference?

Reineke: I don't remember, I'm sorry to say, if I've ever asked Brenda, "What did you suggest he do?" That's between the two of them as a couple. But in terms of the health issue, how do you eliminate that from your mind? Do I think it was a determining, driving factor, the single thing that made him say, "I'm going to retire from politics"? No, I don't think so. I don't think it was the only thing, but I don't think the appeal of a third term, or the appeal of moving to Washington and becoming one voice out of a hundred versus being a governor, going back to the legislative branch from the executive position—I don't think that was particularly appealing to him at the end of the day. What's interesting is, look how many people make that jump back and forth between the two offices: from the state level as governor to the Senate, or from the Senate to governor—that happens as well. So I see some natural transition there, but really for him, did he and Brenda want to start over in a new place? And I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I know from being with him enough that he was not as big a fan of Washington, DC, as I know I am personally.

DePue: Another part of the issue is, as governor, you're definitely an executive; you're in charge of something, you have to make decisions. It's a quite different position to be a senator, a very deliberative process; you're truly in the legislative mode. And even though he had started in legislative mode, do you think his heart was more on the executive side than on being a legislator?

Reineke: Oh, yeah, definitely. Think about why people criticize members of the Senate, rightly or wrongly: at the end of the day they're just a voice; they don't really have to take responsibility the way a governor or a mayor or a president has to. You get to opine; you get to say a lot of things. You may do good. I'm not saying that. But it's a different kind of responsibility. The buck doesn't stop at a senator's desk; it stops at a governor's desk or any other chief executive. There's a difference. There's a big difference. So I think that's probably a hard transition to make.

I think a good example is Evan Bayh, when you think about it. He was a great governor, in my opinion, of Indiana, and I think he did a fine job as U.S. senator. But he essentially said to everybody a few months ago that he's tired of the games of Washington. Now he wants to go run something again. That's his mentality—whatever—he winds up running.

DePue: And speculation is, maybe it might be a run for the presidency somewhere down the road.

Reineke: Somewhere down... I know he's got like eleven million dollars in his Senate campaign fund.

DePue: So in retrospect, do you think Edgar made the right decision?

Reineke: Oh, yeah, because it's the right decision for him. We're the only ones who can make the right decisions for ourselves—no one else. Maybe your spouse or your partner can help, but you have to live with yourself.

DePue: That might get us to a logical transition here, unless there's some other loose end in those four years of his administration, to get to your decision to resign and move on to the private world.

Reineke: Oh, sure. I spoke with the governor after he made his decision. He made his announcement in August of '97, so it was September of '97. I felt that I really had done everything I could do in terms of state government. I'd been there since 1981, my Dave O'Neal days. So what else did I want to do? There wasn't much else to do after being a chief of staff if you didn't run for office on your own. I was in a cabinet position; I had lots of governor's office positions. So I had to figure out what was I going to do to pay for all my needs—my family's needs—and the private sector was an option.

I remember a fellow, who will go unnamed at this point, who was very close to George Ryan, came to see me and suggested that I could work—this is the second time this happened—for George in some capacity. If he was to win election, I could be considered for a position in his administration. I remember saying to the guy, Thank you, I appreciate it, very nice—but that's not something I want to do. But that conversation was the catalyst for me to decide, Yes, I have to leave, because it crystallized for me the fact that that's it; it's going to be more of the same if I stayed in Springfield. We loved the Springfield area, Petersburg—great, lovely area, great place to raise a family—but from a career perspective, I had to go somewhere else.

So that's when I started talking to people about opportunities in the private sector; give me some advice. Talked to Arnie Weber, who was former president and chancellor of Northwestern University; Arnie had sat on some boards. Asked his advice and had conversations with people about, What would I be good at or what attributes do I bring to the table, things like that. Then Hill & Knowlton, this company, actually approached me, and asked if I would consider a position with them.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about Hill & Knowlton, then.

Reineke: It's a large global public relations firm, with offices all over the world. I have worked in various offices around the U.S., principally out of the Chicago office,

but I've run our Washington, DC, office and Los Angeles. I go on assignment for clients: last year, AIG, and last year and this year, CIGNA, during the health care reform debate. So I wind up living in places like New York or Philadelphia, and my family stays here in the beautiful Midwest, because this is real, normal America.

DePue: You don't live in Illinois, though, do you?

Reineke: I don't. We moved to Indiana. I told the governor that I was moving to Indiana, and I think Governor Edgar looked at me like, are you crazy? He didn't use those words; he's too respectful and too nice of a person. I had lived in both Chicago, and suburban Chicago in St. Charles, at different times of my life and my career—and we were looking at property. We owned a nice piece of property down in Petersburg, outside of Springfield; we wanted to emulate that because we had a number of kids and dogs and cats and all that good stuff. Someone said to me, "Why don't you go over and look in Indiana?" I just kind of rolled my eyes like, Indiana? My view of Indiana was what a lot of Illinoisans have initially when you go into northwest Indiana: very industrial—the steel mills, the refineries. But the reality is, once you get past that tier along Lake Michigan, you start to appreciate what Indiana has: the dunes, which Illinois Sen. Paul Douglas helped create, the national seashore and the national dunes. It gets really hard to tell the difference between Illinois and Indiana, to be honest with you.⁴⁵ I don't mean Chicago, but if you go to the rest of the state, they kind of could be put together and I'd have a tough time saying what state I'm in once you get out of the Chicago metro area. But we bought some property over there, and we've been over there ever since.

DePue: We've talked about this before, but this might be the appropriate time to bring it up again. You spent all these years, so many years, in the Thompson administration and the Edgar administration. At the point in time where Edgar's retiring, did you flirt again with the notion of maybe entering politics yourself?

Reineke: No, I did not. I did not. I think I knew, from watching Jim Edgar and Jim Thompson, everything you had to give up; that really was not what I wanted to do. Now, as I've gotten older and have been in the private sector for twelve and a half years, would I ever consider it if the situation was right? I probably would, but I probably wouldn't run as a Republican anymore. (laughs)

DePue: You'd be running on the Democratic ticket?

Reineke: Oh, I—I—

DePue: To pin you down?

⁴⁵ Interestingly, as a youth attending Wabash College, Edgar felt a keen sense of difference between Illinois and Indiana. Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 2-3.

Reineke: Yeah. I view myself as an independent, frankly, these days, but I have a tendency to vote more Democratic than I do Republican. I supported Barack Obama last year. I know when I vote now in Indiana, I tend to vote for more Democrats, but I did vote for Mitch Daniels; I think he's doing a great job as a Republican. My issue, really, is where the Republican Party at this point in time has positioned itself, and I'm afraid to say that people like the Jim Edgars or the Jim Thompsons of the world, and a lot of other good Republican moderates, are being chased out of the party for philosophical reasons. I don't think that's healthy for the party; I don't think it's healthy for the country. So, who knows? Will a third party ever develop in America? It's tough.

DePue: Are your concerns more on the fiscal or on social issues, as far as the Republican Party is concerned?

Reineke: I think the Republican Party lost its sense of direction on fiscal issues under the Bush administration, and that also goes for members of the Republican Party who were in Congress at the time. So I think that was number one, a big philosophical issue. But on social issues, I would call myself very progressive, very liberal on those issues. I think as the party continues to move to the right, people like myself, and a lot of people in the middle, are not going to find comfort in a lot of those Republican candidates. Regardless of what happens this midterm because of anger over the economy, the growth of government, and anti-incumbency feeling, I still think in the long run if the party doesn't get back to more of a centrist approach—it doesn't mean it can't have a conservative wing—you're not going to win a lot of elections in big, urban-centered industrial states: the Californias, the Illinois, the Pennsylvanias, the New Yorks, the Massachusettses and Jerseys and Michigans, and maybe Ohios.

DePue: If I could venture an opinion, which I'm not supposed to do—

Reineke: Sure.

DePue: —it sounds like you're a Jim Edgar Republican.

Reineke: Yeah, I'm definitely a Jim Edgar Republican. As I mentioned earlier, that article in last Sunday's *New York Times* was so perfect because it illustrated what it takes to be a successful Republican officeholder, in terms of how you have to approach the political environment. Frankly, the Republican Party (laughs) right now, with a few exceptions, is nowhere near that. So yeah, I'm a Jim Edgar Republican and proud to say that.

DePue: Let's wrap up with a few other questions for you, then, on the macro level. You've had a long involvement with both Thompson and Edgar, as we've talked about here. Looking back over both of those administrations, what accomplishments for those governors and for yourself are you most proud of?

Reineke: Let me start with myself. I'm proud, because I was a young man when I started in the Thompson years, that I was able to successfully develop a career in politics

and government; it's something that I always wanted to do. I'm proud that I was able to do well enough in the various assignments that I got in the Thompson administration, and worked directly with Jim Thompson for a lot of years and finished up as a member of his cabinet—that I was able to achieve that. That's all personal stuff. I think at the end of the day, when I look at the Edgar years on a personal level, one of the things I'm most proud of, which I've heard from a couple of people—whether it's true or not, but I assume it's true, since it's a nice statement about me—people thought I was an extremely effective chief of staff for the governor. That's not to say I was better or even different, but a lot of people whose judgments I value on a personal level have told me that. That makes me feel very proud, because Jim Edgar can be a tough taskmaster.

DePue: I assume some of these are Edgar insiders.

Reineke: Yeah, some of the people we've talked about today. That made me feel very, very proud on a personal level. So it wasn't as much about what I achieved, like with the Thompson years—I got all these different positions, and I obviously was doing a good job—it was really about: I did a good job in what I think is one of the most ethical and admirable gubernatorial administrations that I'm familiar with, at least in recent Illinois history. It sounds a little corny, I know, but Jim Edgar stands apart, in my mind, from most other politicians that I encountered in my life.

Back in the bigger picture, in terms of both Thompson and Edgar ... Let's start with the Edgar administration. It's some of the stuff we talked about today. But if I had to pick any one thing, it was his sense of fiscal responsibility while making statewide infrastructure improvements—and that includes everything from education to conservation, from an economic climate to the tax climate. Fundamentally, he put this state back on the right path financially, because he was disciplined and had the ability to look at a situation and assess it, but also had the courage to say no. So I think that's from a big, thirty thousand-foot perspective.

The Thompson administration was a little bit different because it was so much longer, but I think he provided that competitive spark Illinois needed at the time; that sense of enthusiasm when we were coming off of the Walker years; that sense of contention that was out there—problems between the mayor and the governor, the legislature, the lieutenant governor, et cetera. Thompson was able to put Illinois in a position of feeling good about itself and get us through some tough economic times. He was larger than life in a lot of ways, and that's a good thing at times. I think that's what you need; you need a little inspiration. I think Jim Thompson was able to provide that. So that's, again, very macro, but rather than getting into all the specific little achievements here and there. That's my perspective.

DePue: How about regrets?

Reineke: For me?

DePue: Regrets for you and regrets for what the administration, especially in Edgar's case, wasn't able to accomplish, perhaps.

Reineke: As I mentioned earlier on education, I just wish the original objective had been achievable. It was a very good education reform, education advancement outcome. That's the only thing I would ever say, it's too bad we couldn't have really fundamentally achieved that underlying correction to the education funding problem. That is not a major regret in the scheme of things, but that's something that I think the state of Illinois would have been better off with in the long run. That said, there's so much on the positive side of the ledger in the Edgar administration that I don't really have anything that I regret. Do situations like we talked about this afternoon—like the Public Aid scandal, MSI—do they happen? They happen; you have to deal with them. The fact of the matter is, you can survive it, come out if it—and the man remains one of the most popular if not the most popular political figure in Illinois today. I think that says a heck of a lot about him.

Back earlier into the Thompson years, I don't have any regrets there either. I don't regret making the decision not to try to do this for myself, like Kirk Dillard; I didn't run. I consider myself extremely lucky to have had the experiences that I've had in my, I guess almost eighteen years, in Illinois state government. I walk away not thinking, Oh, I wish I would have done this or done that. I did everything I wanted to do.

DePue: Some of this is going to be a rehash, I think, for you, but give us a final assessment, from today's perspective, of Jim Edgar and his administration.

Reineke: I would argue he was the last responsible and effective governor that this state has seen up till today. You don't want to kick anyone when they're down, but I would suggest that George [Ryan], while he strove for and achieved some legislative victories, at the end of the day, his problems and the fact that he's sitting—unfortunately for him and his family—in a federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, will outweigh everything. I think that what we're watching right now, with the trial of Governor Blagojevich, and all the associated—I don't know how to describe it—antics that seem to have continued to occur, whether it's television shows or statements or whatever, is very sad and very disheartening for the people of the state. I think Governor Quinn is trying to do a good job, but I think he hasn't been in office long enough, and now we've got a gubernatorial election between the two. So the way I look at the Edgar administration is, he was the last good governor that the state has had. Hopefully there'll be another good governor that's going to come along sometime.

DePue: Pick the words that would describe why Edgar was successful as governor.

Reineke: Oh, because he cared. He didn't do things just for the sake of a political decision; he fundamentally cared about the rationale and the reason for making those decisions, and what kind of effect his decisions would have on people in the state

of Illinois. He cared about why he made a decision; he didn't make a decision just for the sake of, this is the expedient thing to do. I mean, if he would have done that, you wouldn't have had the fiscal discipline that he had in the early years, the initial standoff with Speaker Madigan when the session went on for all those days into July. You wouldn't have seen him try to fight for true education reform. You wouldn't have seen him stand up against gambling expansion in the state, in terms of the riverboats. (laughs) You remember what happened with the riverboats. No expansion, no expansion, no expansion—then George became governor, deals were cut and all that good stuff, and there's expansion. Again, that's just illustrative. Now, I'm not arguing that that's wrong; I'm just suggesting Jim Edgar stood on principle in terms of what he believed, because I cannot find examples where I would say Jim Edgar did something only because someone wanted him to do it. He took action because he really believed it was the right thing to do. So that's how I describe him.

DePue: This is our third session. They've all been very enjoyable because you have so many insights that you've been willing to share with us. They'll be important historical documents. So how would you like to close these sessions up?

Reineke: I would just like to say I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you. Frankly, when you asked me originally if I'd be willing—well, the governor asked, and then you and I chatted—to have these kind of conversations, I made the decision that it was important enough from a historical perspective, that if I could be a small part of helping put together a picture of an administration, it would be worth it. I think I brought to the table a perspective that was slightly different than some of the other folks you're talking with, in the sense that I had the opportunity to work with two very different personalities as governor, in a whole lot of different positions, with a blend of government and political in between. I just think at a certain point you need to try to be as honest and as direct as you can, which is why during these sessions I did not want to avoid any subject, while I may not have remembered all details or all dates and times correctly, I attribute that to age rather than me trying to divert... I think it's important for people to understand what it's like being on the inside and why decisions were made. The other thing is, I think that I have a view that can actually look at things from a larger perspective, somewhat historical but also maybe why we did things from a strategic perspective. I've enjoyed the exercise or the conversations, however you want to describe it.

DePue: Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity, Gene.

Reineke: Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview #3)